University of Alberta

Intercultural Theatre: Transferring Plays from Africa to Canada

by

Heather Marie Fitzsimmons Frey

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Department of Drama

Edmonton, Alberta
Spring 2003

National Library of Canada
Acquisitions and Bibliographic Services
395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada
Acquisitions et services bibliographiques
395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-82203-6

Canada

University of Alberta

Library Release Form

Name of Author: Heather Marie Fitzsimmons Frey

Title of Thesis: Intercultural Theatre: Transferring Plays from Africa to Canada

Degree: Master of Arts

Year this Degree Granted: 2003

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Library to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves all other publication and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis, and except as herein before provided, neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.

Heather Marie Fitzsimmons Frey
9806 88 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
Canada
T6E 2R3

Date Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research: January 30 '03

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Intercultural Theatre: Transferring Plays from Africa to Canada* submitted by Heather Fitzsimmons Frey in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Dr. Rosalind Kerr

Dr. John A. Hawkins

Dr. E. Ann McDougall

Date Approved:

30 Jan 2003

Dedication

For my husband, Rod Fitzsimmons Frey
and
for all intercultural theatre practitioners across Canada.

Abstract

This thesis examines the process of creating intercultural theatre and the transfer of theatre from Africa to Canada. I use Patrice Pavis' "hourglass of cultures" as a tool to examine that process, and integrate theories of hybridity, third space, and translation into the analysis. The plays I use as case studies are Wole Soyinka's *Madmen and Specialists*, Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not To Blame*, and Zakes Mda's *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses*. All three plays were produced and performed in Toronto between 1999 and 2001.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the people who supported me as I worked on my thesis. Thanks to my advisor, Rosalind Kerr, for believing in me from the time I began the project. Thanks to my fellow graduate students with whom I shared many ideas, frustrations, and joys. Thanks to my tireless editors, including Rebecca Babcock, Mary Ballantyne, Frances Bitney, Erika Norrie, and especially my mom, Sharon Fitzsimmons, and my husband, Rod. Many thanks to the people who agreed to be interviewed for this project: Tony Adah, Bayo Akinfemi, Modupe Olaogun, and Rhoma Spencer; and also to the people who helped me to interpret information, including Wisdom Agorde, Joseph Iyekekpolor, Michael Frishkopf, Enritan Rotimi, and Paul Templan. Finally, I would like to thank members of my committee, Beau Coleman, Alex Hawkins, and Ann McDougall, for their comments and kind support.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1: *Madmen and Specialists* and the Hourglass of Cultures	11
Source Culture	13
Target Audience	15
Cultural and Artistic Modelling	17
Artistic Modelling: Wole Soyinka and "The Fourth Stage"	17
Yoruba Mythology: The Orisun and the Ogboni	20
Western Thought: Christianity and Greek Philosophy	30
Nigerian Civil War	32
Class Conflict	39
Conclusions	44
Perspective of the adapters and their work of adaptations	45
Preparatory Work of the Actors	50
The Theatrical Representation of Culture and the Use of Reception Adaptors	52
Readability	56
Given and Anticipated Consequences	57
Conclusions	58
Chapter 2: *The Gods Are Not To Blame*, Africanisation and Translation	61
Africanisation of the Content	61
Africanisation through Music, Dance, and Proverbs	67
Transferring *The Gods Are Not To Blame* to the Canadian Stage	70
Conclusions	79
Chapter 3: *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* and Brechtian Performance Techniques	81
Roots of the Script: Source Culture	82
Exporting Thematic Treatment of Issues from Southern Africa to Canada	89
Brecht and the Intercultural Theatre Transfer	100
V-effekt	101
Gestus	104
Not...but	106
Historicization	107
Brechtian Techniques	109
Conclusions	110
Chapter 4: Conclusions	112
Works Cited	118

Introduction

When researching and developing this thesis, I aimed to explore the intercultural theatre process, specifically as it relates to performing African theatre in Canada. The process of bringing a script from one part of the world to another raises provocative questions exploring foreignness and cultural difference on stage. It is my aim to consider ways that people have already produced, and ways that they could potentially approach, intercultural theatre projects.

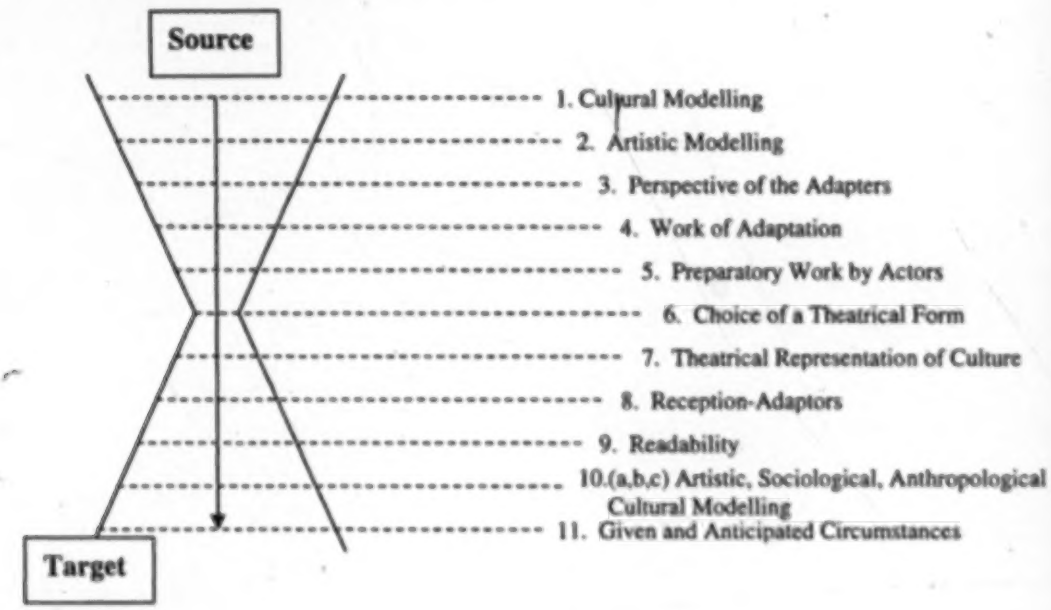

Fig. 1. "The Hourglass of Cultures." (Pavis, *Crossroads* 4)

My theoretical approach brings me to examine intercultural theatre process[1] through Patrice Pavis' widely cited and critiqued[2] model known as the "hourglass of

[1] Intercultural theatre theorists are numerous, and the following are some valuable examples. "Staging the Foreign as Cultural Transformation," by Erika Fischer-Lichte in her *Dramatic Touch of Difference* (1990) is a helpful overview of twentieth century intercultural theatre practice. *The Intercultural Performance Reader*, edited by Patrice Pavis, (1996), collects essays and interviews concerning recognised intercultural theatre practitioners, tools for analysis, and theories. *The Play Out of Context: Transferring Plays from Culture to Culture*, edited by Hanna Scolnicov and Peter Holland (1989) includes essays dealing specifically with intercultural theatre transfer. The introduction to *Women's Intercultural Performance* by Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins provides a valuable overview of the literature relating to feminism and intercultural theatre.

[2] For example, Rustom Bharucha openly criticises the "hourglass model," while Julie Holledge and Joanne Tompkins' "Introduction: Culture, Feminism and Theatre" cites Pavis's model as one of the

cultures" (fig. 1). The model is intended to operate as a tool for a theatre company embarking on an intercultural theatre project and to provide a way of understanding theatre practice, in which model the top of the "hourglass" contains the source (foreign) culture (*Crossroads* 6). "In order to reach us," he writes, referring in his case to Europe, "this culture must pass through a narrow neck" (*Crossroads* 6). Grains of sand, which represent elements of performance and culture that are fine enough, will flow to "our" side "without any trouble" (*Crossroads* 6). The grains of sand will rearrange themselves in a way that may appear random, but they are regulated by the filters used. As a theoretical base, I used Pavis' model as a way of thinking about the process of transferring African theatre to Canada.

When I analysed the production process, I found I constantly had to shift how I positioned myself in relation to the "hourglass". In fact, I have four subject positions, depending on how I am using the model, or how I want to explore the results. In issues relating to the first six filters of the "hourglass", I take on the role of a company dramaturge. That is to say I imagine what I would have needed to examine had I been working on the production with the company. However, I sometimes found it desirable to position myself as the production director. In these cases, I imagine what kinds of choices I might have made if I were directing the show using intercultural theatre theory as a process tool. Third, I position myself as an audience member and member of the so-called "target culture." As such, I consider my reactions to performances, my questions, and my understandings.

My fourth position is that of researcher analyst. Before embarking on this thesis, I sought to use the model myself to create an intercultural theatre project at the University of Alberta. With a team of actors and musicians, we produced *The Ik*, a play originally performed by Peter Brook's company. Because I was working on the production, it was logical for me to perform the roles of dramaturge and director. It was not my object in this instance to position myself as audience but we had talk back sessions in order to obtain a sense of the audience's opinions and positions. However, in the case of this thesis, as I was not directly involved in the productions, I

---

three most important models of intercultural theatre. The other two are Marvin Carlson's seven-step model of the 'possible relationships between the cultural familiar and the culturally foreign' and

sometimes needed to imagine that I was, and sometimes needed to step outside of the intercultural theatre process and the model I was using in order to comment on the work of the performers. In this fourth position, I am attempting to see the whole picture and to act as an analyst with the benefit of hindsight. In this role especially, I need to acknowledge that I am a Western educated graduate student from Alberta who wishes to know more about African theatre, but at the beginning of this research project, knew very little about it.

My position as researcher became more important as I began to realise that there were numerous variables I could not control about the nature of the productions. I am more interested in the *way* the intercultural theatre process operates than I am in the content of any particular plays. This proved fortunate, since I had no control over what plays theatre groups in Canada decided to perform. From a limited selection of work,[3] I chose Wole Soyinka's *Madmen and Specialists,* Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not To Blame,* and Zakes Mda's *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* primarily because they had been recently performed (2001, 1999, 2001), and secondarily because they are widely acclaimed African scripts which demand action of their audiences. All three plays are part of the rapidly developing canon of English-language African works being performed and studied on the African continent, and may be becoming components of a pan-African culture in the same way that Shakespeare, Arthur Miller and Caryl Churchill have come to denote "Western" culture. Even though these plays were written in response to socio-political issues facing the writers' contemporary communities, they also speak to audiences outside their communities.

Since the productions were recent, I could access some information about the productions and the production process from archives and from interviews with

---

Bonnie Marranca's model which is more based on social commitment (Holledge and Tompkins 8, 9).

[3] Performance of African plays in Canada began in the late 1960s and 1970s. Touring South African groups were presenting work in Canada, while local groups like Toronto's Theatre Fountainhead produced plays like Wole Soyinka's *The Swamp Dwellers* (Caudeiron 42 – 45). Nevertheless, the performance of African scripts remained infrequent. During the 1970s Vera Cudjoe established Black Theatre Canada because she said there was a real need for black cultural and artistic development (BTC 1). However, groups like BTC primarily produced their own work or Caribbean work. In the 1990s Broken English Theatre was established in Ottawa to present the stories of new Canadians, but they tend to focus on new work rather than established work.

participants. Nevertheless, access to information was uneven and that which was available was of variable quantity and quality. The directors, Tony Adah, Bayo Akinfemi, and Rhoma Spencer all agreed to be interviewed about their goals and their production processes. Modupe Olaogun, the producer of *The Gods Are Not To Blame* and *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* also agreed to an interview, but I had only the briefest conversation with Hart House Theatre production staff for *Madmen and Specialists*. And while I was able to see both *Madmen and Specialists* and *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* but I did not see *The Gods Are Not To Blame* and had to reconstruct the performance in my imagination based on reviews and the director's comments. Finally, even the material available on the playwrights was uneven. I found numerous articles on and interviews with Wole Soyinka, and several essays he had written about his own work. For Ola Rotimi there was less secondary material, but there were still articles and a few essays he had written. Finally, for Zakes Mda there was considerably less critical material available[4]. Not only was I unable to control anything about the productions and the way they occurred in Canada, but my information resources were of uneven depth, volume, and quality.

The two theatre groups from which I took the case studies are from Toronto, and have mandates to produce African theatre. The group that produced *Madmen and Specialists* is an *ad hoc* university group formed for an international conference on Wole Soyinka.[5] Tony Adah, a Nigerian graduate student in drama presented the play to coincide with the conference and to open the Hart House Theatre season. The second group is Modupe Olaogun's AfriCan Theatre Ensemble "dedicated to exploring various traditions in the theatre arts, beginning with African theatre." They produced *The Gods are Not to Blame*(1999) and *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* (2001).[6] Olaogun founded AfriCan for four distinct reasons. First, she

---

[4] The only interview I found was in the *Globe and Mail* with Sandra Martin, December 4, 2001. However, Mda published two articles: "Politics and the Theatre: Current Trends in South Africa." in *Theatre and Change in South Africa*, 1996 ; and "Theater and Reconciliation in South Africa." in *Theater*, 1995. He also published a book called *When People Play People: Development Communication Through Theatre*, 1993.

[5] The conference was hosted by the University of Toronto Drama Centre and was called Pre-, Post-, and Neo- Colonialisms: Wole Soyinka and Contemporary Theatre. I was a conference participant.

[6] At the moment, AfriCan produces one play each season. In 2000 they produced Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again.*

believes that African drama does not get as much exposure in Canada as African fiction, and she feels that it should. She also sees trained actors from Africa coming to Canada and being unable to find roles or being uninterested in the roles in offered up by the mainstream theatre. She feels that theatre, unlike fiction, is an excellent way to enable African Canadians[7] to develop community and set down roots. Finally, she wants to share these excellent but largely unfamiliar plays with the general Canadian public.

One of the complications with using the "hourglass model" to analyse the plays, with its emphasis on "source" and "target," is a tension between an assumed purity of cultures and actual heterogeneity throughout. Although the "hourglass of cultures" encourages both the creation and acknowledgement of hybridity in an intercultural theatre project, it still creates a linear model which emphasises there and here, us and them, then and now, foreign and familiar. Yet the reality of African theatre culture and the Canadian environment is much more cosmopolitan and heterogeneous than the model implies.

Ania Loomba explores meanings and interpretations of hybridity in her book *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. She suggests that hybridity is the postcolonial preoccupation with "in-betweenness, diasporas and liminality, with the mobility and cross-overs of ideas and identities generated by colonialism" (173).[8] She recommends scholars avoid thinking in terms of opposites by "pit[ting] the themes of migrancy, exile and hybridity against rootedness, nation and authenticity" and says we must instead "locate and evaluate their ideological political and emotional valencies, as well as their intersections in the multiple histories of colonialism and postcoloniality" (183). In this study, I am using the idea of hybridity to enhance my understanding of intercultural theatre process, and to allow my research to reference the cross-overs of ideas, as well as human mobility and migration. In spite of the binary structure the "hourglass of cultures" encourages, the model does open space

[7] For Olaogun, African Canadians are distinct from what she calls a more geographically diverse "anonymous black population" in Ontario. African Canadians are first and second generation Canadians whose immediate origins are in Africa rather than the United States, the Caribbean, or Europe.

for hybridity within the theatre transfer process. However, it is important to envision the mechanics of hybridity through the entire intercultural theatre process, from source, to process, to target.

An African play, complete with script and stage directions, is a relatively new thing – a product itself of cultural hybridity. Unlike parts of Asia and Europe, the African continent does not have a broadly recognised centuries-old theatrical tradition.[9] Theatre practitioners, anthropologists, and researchers rightly point to a performative storytelling tradition in West Africa, the "Yoruba Operas" in Nigeria,[10] and a wide range of theatrical, dance, mask, and ritual activities that exist across the continent.[11] These theatrical performances continue to occur in ever-evolving forms. However, until African performers began to read European and North American plays, they did not publish plays.[12] Therefore, the style of an African scripted play necessarily draws on European and North American work for some structural, literary, and performance conventions, regardless of whatever indigenous

---

[8] Loomba acknowledges problems with hybridity, such as its potential to negate power relations and tensions between different groups, or the way it can universalise the experience of the colonial encounter (183).

[9] "Hansel Ndumbe Eyoh at the University of Buea writes "It is now generally accepted that there is a phenomenon called Anglophone African theatre, just as it is accepted that there is something called European or American theatre. Ever since the Nigerian Wole Soyinka won the 1986 Nobel Prize, the question no longer occurs whether Anglophone African theatre exists or not." (25 *World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre: Africa.*) I am arguing here that we must recognise the inherent hybridity of African scripts, I do not in any way dispute that Anglophone African theatre exists.

[10] Erika Fischer-Lichte writes that these too were created out of the cantata and choral works of the Christian church during the 1930s and 1940s, and the first troupe was not founded until 1946 ("Theatre, Own" 17). Karin Barber describes the evolution of Yoruba Opera and provides substantial case studies and interviews in *The Generation of Plays*, 2000.

[11] Biodun Jeyifo presents three historical views of African theatre: first , that there wasn't any theatre prior to colonial contact; second that there was a variety of things that could be considered theatrical, although usually not all elements were employed at once; and finally, a third counter-discourse that is "insistent in its declaration of Africa as a continent endowed with rich, varied expressive and performance arts of the theatre" (246). He adds the important observation that this assertion is much easier to make since "we now find the privileging of *orality* as an equally valid, equally empowering medium of historical transmission of accumulated skills and cultural patterns" (246).

[12] As Erika Fischer-Lichte points out, Western theatre was introduced as a model of colonizing society ("Theatre, Own" 15). In early 20th century productions organized by missionaries or colonial authorities, "students were encouraged to perform European dramas styled on the Western model in order that they adopt and imitate the foreign model" (16). Sometimes African traditions were included, such as open air dramas, narrative gestures, local music, dance or ceremony "in order to ease the learning and internalization of the foreign model." She explains that students were sometimes encouraged to write plays based on the stories and oral tradition of their homeland, but these too, were intended to "instil the students with Western values and to encourage a Western attitude and behaviour towards these values" (16).

performance traditions those scripts may also incorporate.[13] An African script is already a document of intercultural exchange.

Some African plays are intended for local audiences, but many playwrights in Africa have an international audience in mind when they are writing the play.[14] Unlike some intercultural theatre situations "foreign/source" culture appears "pure" and where the artists never consider the "target" culture when creating their theatrical works, creators of African plays often hope for an international audience while writing the script. Even if they are not seeking an audience off the continent, the diversity of African languages within a single country means that some writers prefer to write their work in English or French in order to be accessible to more audiences at home – already a second language for the writer, already an intercultural intention, and already a source of hybridity. Further intensifying the sense of hybridity within the scripts, although I selected scripts I believed were "African" I later discovered that all three case study scripts were written in exile and were either work shopped or debuted in North America or the United Kingdom.

By performing an African play in Canada, the intercultural nature of the production is heightened because the actors, director, and creative team are living in Canada and performing for a Canadian audience that may or may not be familiar with the play and the environment in which it was originally written. Furthermore, members of the creative team may or may not be new Canadians. Arjun Appadurai describes this kind of population as part of the "ethnoscape." He writes: "By 'ethnoscape,' I mean the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees exiles, guest workers and other moving groups and persons constitute an essential feature of the world" (231). References to

---

[13] Ola Rotimi's paper "Much Ado About Brecht" argues that "most, if not all, of the salient determinants of Brecht's epic theatre were already in vogue in traditional African theatre practice" (253). Possibly other elements familiar to Western theatrical tradition also found in African plays were already present in African drama, and may not be imported. Nonetheless, even the act of scripting a play, as opposed to its living entirely in oral tradition, does mean that African scripted plays are essentially hybrid entities.

[14] Egejuru explains that until 1978, when his book *Black Writers: White Audience* was written, not only were most African writers in practice writing for a European bourgeois or African elite audience "what is most surprising is that most of the authors whom I interviewed claimed to be writing exclusively for an African audience" (36). Egejuru even questions where the influence of an African

ritual, language, song, dance, historical or current events, political figures, social customs, and other elements of culture located within a particular community, could be perceived as "foreign" to a Canadian audience, but might be familiar to the members of the audience who share the "source culture". At the same time, foreignness is also mediated by the fact that elements of the script are already very familiar to a Canadian audience and Canadian trained actors, even though the content is culturally specific.

Another way to break down the "hourglass of cultures" source/target binary that is pervasive in intercultural theatre thinking is to consider Homi Bhabha's idea of third space[15] as potentially part of the production and performance process. (*Location* 1994). Sometimes called an *interstitial space* or *in-between space*, the third space exists as a space in which cultures make contact, either in terms of geographic space, time, culture, tradition, or change. Bhabha argues that these elements challenge us to locate and isolate cultural interactions and when different cultures make contact, a "third space" opens up between them. This gap or fissure is capable of altering perceptions of ourselves and others, creating a strange intimacy where interactions between cultures would not normally be possible. The tension created also means that it is not always possible to understand the other culture that is bordered by the third space because of the disruptive distance and the non-synchronicity of cultures. Bhabha's third space breaks down the binaries of "here" (in Canada) and "there" (in Africa), now and not now, us and them, one or the other, and offers an alternative space which is outside the binary restrictions of our language and thought, which questions the binary spheres of life, and which links them. He writes,

> the pact of interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the I and the You....The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific

---

audience can be found in much of the published African work. Wisdom Agorde (2001) confirms that most African writers continue to have an international audience in mind.

[15] Sometimes Bhabha considers third space a proper noun as in "Third Space" and sometimes he uses lower case letters as in "third space." He uses lower case letters in *The Location of Culture*, and because I refer to it extensively, I have adopted the same practice, except for quotes in which he uses the upper case.

implications of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious....The intervention of the Third Space...makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process... (208).

The ambivalence is particularly relevant to intercultural theatre communication in that it demonstrates how very difficult it is to predict the production of meaning, or the participants' willingness to enter a third space for communication. Third space, like hybridity, allows the "hourglass" binary to be breached and go beyond a mere "othering" of the performance.

In Chapter 1, I work my first case study through the "hourglass of cultures," as if I were producing it. I take on each of the subject positions I mentioned in order to evaluate the usefulness of the model as a tool for creating intercultural theatre in the intensely hybrid and heterogenous circumstances I have outlined. The case study is the University of Toronto production of Wole Soyinka's 1970 script *Madmen and Specialists,* which I saw in October 2001. Originally conceived as a protest of the Nigerian civil war and the horrific atrocities that went with it, the play tells the story of a young doctor who returns from the war with his father. The young doctor abandons medicine and becomes a power hungry intelligence officer, while his father works with victims of the war, trying to help them learn to cope with their new infirmities by teaching them a nihilistic philosophy. Confronting the audience with questions about violence, family ties, cannibalism, and what it means to be human, the play presents fascinating challenges for any director. By working the play through the filters of Pavis' model in sequence, I develop the notion of the "hourglass" as a technique for intercultural theatre and I also discover some of its limitations.

In Chapter 2, I consider a production I did not see: the AfriCan Theatre Ensemble's debut production of Ola Rotimi's 1968 *The Gods Are Not To Blame* in 1999. Self-consciously intercultural, the play is an adaptation of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex.* I specifically consider three process-oriented filters of the hourglass "Theatrical Representation of Culture", "Reception-Adapters" and "Readability." To do that I explore Rotimi's efforts to Africanise the play through content and form, and

I apply Julie Byczniski's theory about the effects of not translating in theatre, and the ways that foreignness on stage can operate as cultural resistance and consciously create a third space.

In Chapter 3, I consider AfriCan's 2001 production of Zakes Mda's 1988 script *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* (October 4 – 21, 2001) that I also saw. The play is about waiting, class relations, and the cruel daily frustrations of the South African apartheid system. The story revolves around two women waiting in a food line for days, arguing over the use of a chair. I focus on the filters of the "hourglass" dealing with actors, theatrical form, and reception adaptors by examining themes in the script that are relevant to Canadian audiences, and exploring how a production might employ theatre-for-development and Brechtian performance techniques to make a meaningful intercultural theatre presentation. I consider ways in which intercultural theatre transfer does not have to be universalizing, homogenizing or culturally appropriating, while still communicating with the foreign audience.

In Chapter 4, I draw together conclusions and questions about the challenges of transferring plays from one culture to another and about the intercultural theatre process. I also comment on the analytical value of four theoretical terms I am using: the "hourglass", hybridity, third space, and finally, cultural translation and transfer. The complexity of the intercultural theatre process makes each case unique. However, understanding how the tools in the process operate reveals the effects of planning, the existence of ambiguities, and the possibilities for constructing communication.

Chapter 1: *Madmen and Specialists* and the "Hourglass of Cultures"

Patrice Pavis' "hourglass of cultures" is a tool for understanding the process of transferring theatre from one culture to another, and in this first chapter, I test the tool using a Toronto performance of Wole Soyinka's *Madmen and Specialists* as a case study. I examine each filter of the "hourglass" as if I were producing the play myself, so I am acting as dramaturge and as director. I also make reference to Tony Adah's production of the play at the University of Toronto Hart House Theatre, October 17 – 20, 2001, taking on the roles of researcher and audience.[1] At the top of the "hourglass" is the source culture of Soyinka's Nigeria in the 1960s, and at the bottom of the "hourglass" is a Toronto audience. I have overlaid the model with the understanding that in this process, hybridity is present at each stage of the "hourglass": the script bridges several cultures of the post-colonial world;[2] and both the artistic team and the audience are culturally heterogeneous. The hybridity within the script and the performance process allows for the development of Homi Bhabha's concept of a third space. Developing in the tensions created by difference, the in-between nature of this space creates both challenges and opportunities for the producers of intercultural theatre.

Madmen and Specialists is about the absurdity and the horror of war, and the way impacts upon on our humanity. The plot revolves primarily around two characters: Dr. Bero, and Old Man, who is Dr. Bero's father. In the play's past action, the two men offer to provide medical support to the troops. Dr. Bero is quickly promoted to the ruthless Intelligence Division while Old Man provides occupational therapy for the war wounded. Bero becomes obsessed with power and his father seems to go insane. First, Old Man does not teach his students menial tasks, but instead to think and to hate the system that created the war that maimed them. Later,

---

[1] Patrice Pavis demonstrates how his model can be used in a similar way in his 1990 analysis of two intercultural theatre projects, one by Peter Brook and one by Ariane Mnouchkine in an article entitled "Interculturalism in the Contemporary Mise En Scène: The Image of India in 'The Mahabharata' and the 'Indiade.'"

[2] In a 1992 interview, Wole Soyinka was asked how he reacted to being called "the man between", meaning the man between two worlds. In his response he says, "It has never occurred to me that there is a problem, or that there is something special about anybody striving towards two or three or four multiple worlds. It is a very Eurocentric thing" (Soyinka 2001 167).

Old Man makes a "modest proposal" to the generals suggesting that they should eat the people they kill rather than waste the meat. When the play opens, Dr. Bero and Old Man are returning home from the civil war,[3] having been dramatically changed by the experience.

Despite his apparent insanity, Bero wants to access Old Man's power, so Bero imprisons Old Man in his home. We later learn that the Old Man's lessons on hating the system have made him into a cult leader. The cult is called "As," and Bero wants the secret to that power.

BERO. What exactly is As, Old Man?

OLD MAN. As?

BERO. You know As, the playword of your convalescents, the pivot of whatever doctrine you used to confuse their minds, your piffling battering ram at the idealism and purpose of this time and history. What is As, Old Man?

OLD MAN. You seem to have described it to your satisfaction.

BERO (*thundering. Moving suddenly, he passes his swagger-stick across the OLD MAN's throat, holding it from behind and pressing.*) I'm asking you! What is As? Why As!

OLD MAN. (*gasps but tries to smile. He cranes up to look at him in the face.*) In a way I should be flattered. You want to borrow my magic key. Yours open only one door at a time.

BERO. WHY AS!

OLD MAN. And rusty? Bent? Worn? Poisonous? When you're through the lock is broken? The room empty?

BERO. What is As?

OLD MAN. But why? Do you want to set up shop against me. Or against... others? I think we have a conspiracy.

BERO. What is As?

OLD MAN. As Was, Is, Now, As Ever Shall be...

BERO. Don't play with me, Old Man.

---

[3] The civil war Soyinka is reacting against is the Biafran Civil War in Nigeria. However, he intentionally left specific details about the war out so that he could make the script comment more generally on issues relating to war.

OLD MAN. As doesn't change.

BERO. (*increases pressures*). From what? To what?

OLD MAN. (*choking, tugs at the swagger-stick. BERO lets go. The OLD MAN gets up, chafing his neck*). Do you know what one of those men once said? Let's send our gangrenous dressings by post to those sweet-smelling As agencies and homes. He sat down to compile a mailing list.

BERO. Yes?

OLD MAN. I understood.

BERO. What did you understand?

OLD MAN. As. (278, 279)

The more Dr. Bero tries to control the things he does not understand, the more desperate he becomes. At the end of the play, Dr. Bero kills his father and the Bero house is burnt to the ground.

In this chapter I explore how third space and hybridity intersect with Pavis's "hourglass of cultures" by applying each "hourglass" filter to Tony Adah's production of Wole Soyinka's *Madmen and Specialists*. I begin at the source culture, then identify the target culture, following which I gradually move through the "hourglass." I assume the roles of researcher, dramaturge, director, and audience member as I consider the development of the script, the rehearsal process, the performance, and audience response.

Source Culture

The first essential element of "the hourglass of cultures" suggests we identify the source culture. The source culture is the culture from which the playwright comes and the geographical and sociocultural background of the events which inspired the piece at its inception. The director must locate the source culture in time and space, and it may have little to do with the performers or the target audience.

Patrice Pavis's "hourglass of cultures" is intended to begin with a source that is more purely foreign than this one. In post-colonial Nigeria, the intellectual and political elite are educated in Western literature, culture, and mores. Fusing traditions, structures, and ideas from both Western and Nigerian worlds, plays like *Madmen and*

Specialists are created. The internal hybridity of the play is compounded by its production history, because although this play opened in Nigeria, it was written during Soyinka's exile, and was workshopped in the United States. When Pavis created his "hourglass," he imagined that the target culture would borrow, employ, or otherwise appropriate performance traditions that were well-established. In this case, the playwright is appropriating Western performance traditions to create his script.

Although it is impossible in this limited space to completely understand the source culture that inspired Wole Soyinka to write *Madmen and Specialists*, it is useful to begin with a summary of the key events in Nigeria's history on which he is drawing. After Nigeria was granted independence in 1960, there was only a brief period of stability before riots broke out, elections were boycotted and/or rigged, and there were two military coups (Afigbo 61). In 1967 Lieutenant Ojukwu declared independence for the Republic of Biafra, an eastern region in Nigeria. As a result, a violent civil war began, which included massacres of the Igbo people, destruction of property and infrastructure, and a breakdown of the social and economic systems. The conflict did not end until the Biafrans were starved into submission and Ojukwu fled to the Ivory Coast.

In the meantime, Wole Soyinka formed his Orisun Theatre group[4] to perform guerrilla theatre protest plays.[5] In 1967, he visited the Biafran regime to present a political alternative to war, and the government accused him of conspiring with the Biafrans.[6] Jailed for twenty-two months, sometimes in solitary confinement, he wrote

---

[4] The "orisun" is the name of the Yoruba pantheon of gods.

[5] When he was answering some questions about his guerrilla theatre, Soyinka said, "It is provoked by a situation, as I've just said, and addresses itself directly to that situation. It is what I call a "Shot-gun Writing," a "Shot-gun Performance," you discharge and disappear" (Soyinka, "Zimbabwe" 79). In his description he used the example of the "Rice Scene" which was protesting inflated prices of rice to increase the wealth of government officials and their friends. Actor, director, and teacher Chuck Mike also participated in the "Rice Scene" and described the event at the "Pre-, Post-, and Neo- Colonialisms: Wole Soyinka and Contemporary Theatre" conference hosted by the University of Toronto Drama Centre, in October 2001. A group of University of Toronto students then performed a version of the Rice Scene for the conference participants, of whom I was one.

[6] In an interview, Soyinka explained "Let me say this: there is a lot of confusion over this visit of mine to the secessionist region during the war. In fact, there is a lot of confusion over my role in the war. There have been some categorical statements which have astonished me. I am always rather amused at the certainty with which certain allegations are made....So far as one of the purposes of my visit was to put an end to the war which had only just begun, you could, I suppose, call it a peace visit. But – and this I suppose was what really bothered the Federal military regime – the real motivation of the visit

a biography and many poems during that time. After he was released, Soyinka went into voluntary exile in Britain and the United States. Written in exile in 1970, *Madmen and Specialists* is Soyinka's ninth play, immediately preceded by his play *The Road* (1969), his prison notes (*The Man Died* 1972), and some poetry (*Poetry of Prison* 1969). Soyinka workshopped the script at the 1970 Playwrights' Workshop Conference in Connecticut before returning to Nigeria where he modified, performed, and published *Madmen and Specialists* at Ibadan in March of 1971. Soyinka observes that *Madmen and Specialists* was no substitute for the energetic guerrilla theatre protest plays ("Ghetto" 10). Yet Soyinka's colleague Martin Banham argued that after reading the play for the first time, "it seems abundantly clear to me that *Madmen and Specialists* is not only a fearful study of the corruption of mankind... but is also a deeply personal comment upon Soyinka's own suffering in the specific circumstances of the Nigerian tragedy of the last few years," (Banham, "Darkness" 125). The "specific tragedy" to which Banham refers includes both the Biafran Civil War in Nigeria, and Soyinka's imprisonment due to his efforts advocating peaceful solutions. Banham suggests that this play is an angry response to a world of corrupt, power-hungry people who have forgotten their debt to their earth, have forgotten kindness, and cannot even be shocked into ethically responsible behaviour. In other words, it is not guerrilla theatre, but the play must be seen as a kind of protest, relating to his work with the Orisun Theatre.

Target Audience

The target audience at the end of the "hourglass" operates primarily as a gravitational force drawing the performance towards itself. Just as directors need to consider the source culture, as the play travels from one culture to another, they must also identify target destination. When *Madmen and Specialists* was produced in Toronto in October 2001, director Tony Adah had, in mind as his target audience, the participants of the "Pre-, Post-, and Neo- Colonialisms: Wole Soyinka and Contemporary Theatre" conference hosted by the University of Toronto Drama

---

was to present viable and very concrete alternative solutions to the solution by war' (Soyinka, "Gates" 50).

Centre. Conference participants were invited to purchase tickets at a low price as part of their fee and so Adah could direct his play towards experts coming from the Canada, the Caribbean, Nigeria, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Even Wole Soyinka himself attended the performance. The audience that Adah considered his 'target' was very cosmopolitan and well-informed.

However, the producer of the play, Hart House Theatre, had a different audience in mind. *Madmen and Specialists* was the first play in the first Hart House season in five years.[7] When I asked Hart House Theatre Management who actually attended the performance, they were not able to give me an answer, although they indicated "there were a lot of students." We can imagine that since Hart House is on the University of Toronto campus, the audience also included performer friends and relatives, a number of professors, and people who see themselves as "open minded" and interested in unfamiliar plays. In total, 644 people attended the play.[8] The small number in the target audience arguably demonstrates that the play was presented to a very specific group of people within Toronto. Perhaps since the play was the first in Hart House Theatre's new initiative, there was not enough publicity, perhaps the director and the script were unfamiliar, and perhaps the play did not appeal enough to the wider theatre-going community. The audience for which the play was intended in its Toronto Production and the one who actually attended are distinct from one another, and in retrospect, I must consider both of them.

Just as the source culture is not purely foreign, the Canadian target is not the homogeneous culture Pavis envisaged when he created the "hourglass model". An audience consisting of Nigerian Canadians, non-Nigerian Canadians, and knowledgeable conference participants indicates that the target culture is not as purely foreign as intended in the original model. In our rapidly changing, globalised world, finding a culture that is "authentic", "pure," and isolated, is not possible, nor is it useful or important. Acknowledging additional complexity is important in

---

[7] To increase publicity, Hart House also hosted a Saturday talk back workshop with Wole Soyinka. One hundred ninety-five people attended.

[8] The number represented a smaller-than-expected audience for the play. As the first play of their season, Paul Templan, from the Hart House Theatre office suggested that it was the recent September 11 terrorist attacks and not the nature of the play itself that meant attendance was slightly lower for it than for other plays in the season.

understanding the limitations and usefulness of the "hourglass" as a tool for facilitating cultural transfer in theatre.

Cultural and Artistic Modeling

Patrice Pavis suggests that in the theatre transfer process, we first need to consider the artistic codes included within the play, and then the sociological and/or anthropological roots of the piece (Pavis, *Crossroads* 13). In this section, I position myself as the dramaturge for a production of *Madmen and Specialists* and review artistic and cultural elements I would need to understand in order to support the director's planning process and to anticipate audience reactions. It is necessary for a target culture to determine "how we recognize a foreign culture, what indices, stereotypes, presuppositions we associate with it, how we construct from our point of view" (Pavis, *Crossroads* 14). I am concerned with identifying cultural difference, because as Susan Bennet writes, culture only becomes problematic for an audience "when the theatrical product does not coincide to a substantial degree with the cultural education and practice of the audience" (Bennett 166). Although there are many areas in *Madmen and Specialists* that an audience in Canada might identify as foreign, I explore only four: 1) Soyinka's ideas about tragedy; 2) the Nigerian mythologies which are essential to fully understanding the play's metaphors; 3) the horrors of war, which Soyinka relates from his personal experience; and 4) the Nigerian class structures which inform the characters' interactions. These elements are not necessarily specifically Nigerian, but the ways Soyinka presents them in this play are foreign to my experiences.

Artistic Modelling: Wole Soyinka and "The Fourth Stage"

Wole Soyinka wrote an essay called "The Fourth Stage" in which he outlined his philosophy of the theatre. In "The Fourth Stage" he explains "of all the subjective unease that is aroused by man's creative insights, that wrench within the human psyche which we vaguely define as 'tragedy' is the most insistent voice that bids us return to our own sources" (21). To understand the meaning of tragedy on a personal level, Soyinka returns to his roots, where "Yoruba tragedy plunges straight into the

'chthonic realm', the seething cauldron of the dark world will and psyche, the transitional yet inchoate matrix of death and becoming" (22). In *Madmen and Specialists* this return to the matrix of death and becoming is presented through the tension in Bero's efforts to gain power over death, Old Man's creations (the mendicants), and Si Bero's efforts to balance the effects of the evil war by becoming good herself.

In the Yoruba world view there are three planes of existence which exist concurrently and concretely in the life of every Yoruba person: (1) the realm of the gods and ancestors, (2) the here and now, and (3) the realm of the not yet born. Between these realms of simultaneous existence is a gulf or "transitional matrix" whose cosmic guardians may be appeased through ritual and sacrifice. In Yoruba mythology, all the gods and humanity were once bonded together, so in the myth of the gods' descent to earth, the gods crave reunion with humanity, and humans crave a reunion with the essence of the gods. The reunion of gods with humanity is a desire impossible to achieve on both sides of the gulf between the here and now and the realm of the gods and ancestors. Soyinka explains that "the anguish of this severance, the fragmentation of essence from self" is what constitutes tragedy in traditional Yoruba drama (24). Soyinka points out that there would be no tragedy if the gods did not want the reunion as well, but because they do, anguish pours in from two of the three planes of existence. There are no gods in *Madmen and Specialists* but that does not make the tragedy any less acute for the individuals concerned. The humans crave reunion with the gods but their efforts are futile. Old Man craves a reunion with the creator god, so he creates people; Bero craves god-like powers, and Si Bero craves the power of goodness but is afraid of the poisonous power that balances good in the cosmic realm.

Soyinka argues that for the modern tragic dramatist, the theatre works as a fourth stage in the realm of liminality, operating between the three planes of existence, echoing the emotions concerning the anguish of separation, and reflecting the cosmic will that battles to achieve union (27). The god Ogun, the creative god and artist spirit, once tried to achieve reunion with humanity, and in so doing "Ogun not only dared to look into transitional essence, [he] triumphantly bridged it with knowledge,

with art, with vision and the mystic creativity of science" (32). The playwright negotiates the liminal void using Ogun's bridge, and according to Soyinka's philosophy, the theatre practitioner places the bridge on the stage.

In another myth, Ogun successfully fights battles for the Yoruba. One day before entering battle, Ogun drinks palm wine, and in his drunken rage, not only slaughters the enemy, but his own people's army as well. Ogun's desire to achieve union with his people also means that he might destroy them. The interaction between the three planes of existence is an area of tragedy, conflict, risk, pain, and constant desire, and it is this interaction that Soyinka calls the fourth stage. Soyinka structures all of his theatrical writing on the notion of this fourth stage of existence, and his characters draw energy and tragedy from the Yoruba pantheon of gods, especially the hero god Ogun who reaches out to humanity, even as he destroys them.

The "transitional realm" of the fourth stage brings to mind Homi Bhabha's concept of the "third space" which includes the spaces between people, the edges of time, and the margins of cultural difference. The passionate tension between gods and humanity, and their anguish at separation demonstrates how very difficult and potentially dangerous it could be to leave the safety of one's own space, and enter the space in-between, where anything might happen. Since Soyinka argues that theatre is the kind of space where people can experiment with the transitional realm, he gives intercultural theatre tremendous potential power. Bhabha suggests that all kinds of human difference, including time and space, can create a third space in their margins. "All aspects of 'third space' make *knowing* impossible in a homogeneous sense because identities shift, history is displaced, and unity is discarded in its enunciation" (Bhabha, *Location* 37). In other words, entering the third space is always risky, always dangerous, and never the same experience twice. A performance of *Madmen and Specialists* may provide a bridge across the cultural gulf between Nigeria and Canada, but the performance "bridge" operates as a third space which the audience may or may not enter. This cannot be equated in urgency to Ogun's bridge between gods and humanity, but the performance of intercultural theatre can be a human act of passionate will and vision.

Gods like Ogun who choose to travel into the human realm of the here and now have transgressed into a space that they cannot really know, demonstrating how very difficult it is to negotiate the in-between spaces of existence. According to this philosophy, people do not have the colossal desire for connection with one another the way that Yoruba gods and people crave reunion. Yet the liminal spaces between cultures, between eras, between traditions, or between geographic spaces, where people from different worldviews, histories, and experiences collide, may open similar possibilities for passionate exchange. Exploring a Nigerian script like *Madmen and Specialists* in Canada opens the opportunity to enter a space where communication, understanding, or even mere connection between cultural and historical difference may or may not be possible. Wole Soyinka's use of the Fourth Stage to ground his tragedy in the Nigerian worldview supports his view of tragedy while challenging some Canadian ideas about Nigeria.

Yoruba Mythology: The Orisun and the Ogboni

Soyinka uses Yoruba mythology as a philosophical and artistic source for *Madmen and Specialists* and he also uses Yoruba mythology as a cultural resource from which he draws images, parallels, and themes. Yoruba mythology exalts a pantheon known as Orisun, similar to the deities of ancient Greece known to Western audiences. Soyinka employs mythology to intensify the audience's sympathy for certain characters in *Madmen and Specialists*, and to emphasise the ways in which the world is unbalanced due to the mounting atrocities of war. As Soyinka explains in 'The Fourth Stage,' "Morality for the Yoruba is that which creates harmony in the cosmos" (31) and in this play the immorality of the characters instead creates chaos. Yet the significance of the chaos could be lost on a spectator who does not have an understanding of some aspects of the Yoruba pantheon and the nature of Yoruba tragedy.

Madmen and Specialists is not typical of Soyinka's work in that scholars do not agree about the way he uses Yoruba gods to structure the script. Derek Wright argues that while the approach in this play to mythology is "unorthodox… it never [loses] touch with the transitional worldview which informs the greater part of

Soyinka's work" (Wright 28). However, Ketu Katrak does not believe *Madmen and Specialists* stems from Soyinka's Fourth Stage or Ogun philosophy. Katrak claims that in this play the gods are not visible anywhere, there is no redeeming Ogun artist figure, and that there is no anguish at separation from the gods because all the characters are embracing evil (Katrak 154). I agree with Wright that the play explores the "transitional worldview," Ogun's creative/destructive will exists in all characters in the play, and structurally, it is possible to see the repetition of an Obatala myth.

The two gods of the Yoruba pantheon in *Madmen and Specialists* that most significantly aid a spectator's appreciation of the script's themes and structures are the creator god Obatala and the creative god Ogun. The Old Man character in the play evokes Obatala. There are numerous clues, as Shumba explains in his thesis. Like Obatala, Old Man's costume associates him with the colour white.[9] Also, human deformities are an expression of the will of Obatala, and like him, Old Man moulds and creates life among the deformed mendicants. When he teaches the mendicants to use their minds as tools, questioning and subverting everything, he is shaping their lives.

OLD MAN. Unformed minds in deformed bodies.

BERO. Again you are being evasive.

OLD MAN. I asked to be sent where I would do the most good. I was and I did. (278)

Obatala "is the placid essence of creation" (Soyinka, "Fourth" 22). As the god of plastic creation, Obatala gradually shapes, changes, and heals through "the wisdom of acceptance" (Soyinka, "Fourth" 23), and Old Man heals his charges by encouraging them to hate what they have become.

GOYI. Be fair Old Man, how does a man cope with a situation like this? It was all right in the other place.

OLD MAN. So you find it different from the other places?

GOYI. It's not the same.

---

[9] Soyinka says that Obatala is associated with the colour white because white is "for the transparency of heart and mind" ("Fourth" 29).

OLD MAN. There was no madness – then? (*They react, silently*). You were not maimed then? (*He hold up his hand to stop them.*) And I mean, not merely in body. You were maimed then as now. You have lost the gift of self-disgust. (270)

Old Man also asserts his divinity to his followers and son. He asserts it to the mendicants because of Aafaa's answer to Bero's question:

BERO. Who made you insane?

AAFAA. The Old Man, sir....I asked him, Who are you? He answered, The one and only truth. (253, 254)

Later, when talking to Bero himself, he asserts it again:

BERO. You tax my patience. Better watch out in future.

OLD MAN. The future?

BERO. The future, yes. The End...

OLD MAN. Justifies the meanness.

BERO. Just think of this – you have none.

OLD MAN. (*calls after him*) Tell me something new. Tell me what is happening in the future. (*They all listen to BERO's footseteps receding.*) If he'd waited, I would have told him what's happening in the future. (282)

Even in death, the Shumba points out that Old Man does not fall to the ground "because he does not belong there, instead he faces upward to Olodumare in a posture that suggests prayer" (73).[10]

Yet Soyinka only suggests Old Man's divinity, because Old Man himself actively questions the extent of his own powers and the concepts of divinity and omnipotence. Suggesting his possible mortality, he shouts at the mendicants, "do I not know you Man like me?"(288). Later, he mocks Bero in their discussion about the extent of his powers, but in so doing, admits to his own ignorance about omnipotence:

BERO. I do not need illusions. I control lives.

OLD MAN. Control – lives? What does that mean? Tell me what is the experience of it. Is it a taste? A smell? A feel? Do you have a testament that vindicates? (279)

And finally, Old Man questions whether God actually exists:

BERO. Don't you dare patronize me. Answer me, what about it?

---

[10] Oludmare, a third Yoruba creator God, resides in heaven.

OLD MAN. That lightning strikes? It could strike you, no?

BERO. Yes.

OLD MAN. Then you're not omnipotent. You can't do a flood and you – (*Pause*) – can't always dodge lightning. Why do you ape the non-existent one who can? Why do you ape nothing? (282)

Structurally, the narrative loosely follows Obatala's passion play.[11] Like Obatala who is symbolically imprisoned and tortured, Old Man is wrongly imprisoned in the cellar where he patiently endures abuse, embodying Obatala's characteristic "patient suffering" in the "well-known aesthetics of the saint," (Soyinka, "Fourth" 23). But in Obatala's story, Obatala is released and everything turns good, whereas in this story, Old Man is killed and everything gets even worse. In the final scenes of the play, Old Man's association with Obatala is both renewed and withdrawn. Self-loathing is a necessary character trait for the martyr Obatala, and in the beginning, Old Man taught his mendicant disciples the art of self-disgust. But rather than exhibiting self-loathing, Old Man scorns the mendicants through an ecstatic array of insults ending in you "HOLE IN THE ZERO OF NOTHING!" (292). Previously he had taught his disciples to question everything and to become, as he calls them, "heresiarchs of the System arguing questioning querying weighing puzzling insisting rejecting" (288), and "cysts of the system"(290). But suddenly when the Cripple asks a question of *him,* he encourages the mendicants to beat the Cripple, throw him on the

[11] In "The Fourth Stage" Wole Soyinka explains that Obatala's story is performed annually as a passion play. It is a ritual drama of "captivity, suffering and redemption" in which Obatala is symbolically captured, confined, tortured, and ultimately set free (24, 28). John Pepper Clark provides a less obfuscated description, writing: "The annual ritual imprisonment of Obatala is not unlike that of the crucified Christ. Obatala in fact is the creation God of the Yoruba. Though all-powerful, he is gentle and full of love for all creation. In the legend, against the advice of the Oracle Ifa, Obatala, on his way to Sango, the God of Thunder, relieves Eshu, the God of Mischief, here disguised as an old woman, of a pot of oil. The pot breaks in the process with an effect like a sacred vessel breaking – which is not unlike that of opening Pandora's box! Thus Obatala, his white dress all dripping with oil, arrives at the court of King Sango at Oyo, and since nobody recognizes the God, he is thrown into jail when he protests at the ill-treatment of a horse. As a result, drought and famine befall the earth. And it is not until King Sango consults the oracle and is told he must make reparation to an innocent man wrongly punished in his kingdom that the general curse is lifted. This is the story re-enacted in the annual ritual at Oshogbo and other Yoruba towns" (Clark 78, 79).

operating table to destroy, and claims he is trying to *taste*[12] what makes the dreamer, the questioner, and Cripple "heretic tick" (293).

OLD MAN. Oh how dare you raise your hindquarters you dog of dogma and cast the scent of your existence on the lamp-post of Destiny you HOLE IN THE ZERO of NOTHING!

CRIPPLE. I have a question.

OLD MAN. It's the dreamer.

CRIPPLE. I have a question.

OLD MAN. Black that Zero! (*AAFAA, GOYI and BLINDMAN begin to converge on the CRIPPLE*).

CRIPPLE. I have a question.

OLD MAN. Shut that gaping hole or we fall through it.

CRIPPLE. I have a question.

The MENDICANTS' chorus 'Practise' as they beat him.

OLD MAN. Stop him cold, stop him dead! Let me hear the expiring suction of an imperfect system.

CRIPPLE. My question is…

AAFAA snatches one of GOYI's crutches...AAFAA brings down crutch on the CRIPPLE's head.

OLD MAN. Stop him! Fire! Fire! Riot! Hot line! Armageddon!...Bring him over here. Bring him over here. Lay him out. Stretch him flat….Bare his soul! *They heave him onto the table and hold him down while the OLD MAN rips the shirt open to bare the CRIPPLE's chest*...Let us taste just what makes a heretic tick. *He raises the scalpel in a motion for incision.* (292, 293)

In this horrifying act of destruction at the end of the play, Old Man is no longer a martyred and passively suffering echo of Obatala, but is portrayed as having become infected by the destructive humanity around him, which is identified with the destructive powers of Ogun.

---

[12] The fact that Soyinka uses the word "taste" is important in keeping with the cannibalism motif that I discuss later.

Ogun is the second god with whom audiences need to be familiar. While Obatala is the creator god, Ogun is the creative god, or, the artist. He is "the creative urge and instinct, the essence of creativity" (Soyinka, "Fourth" 22). Completely different from Obatala, without any illusions of patience or calm, "Ogun is the embodiment of Will, and the Will is the paradoxical truth of destructiveness and creativeness in acting man....he is a profound artist only to the degree which he comprehends and expresses this principle of destruction and re-creation" (Soyinka, "Fourth" 27). In an interview, Soyinka explains his fascination with Ogun, whom he calls "the symbolic figure of my society.... He represents this duality of man: the creative, the destructive aspect" (Fiebach 39). The creative and destructive forces within the script can be linked to the characteristics of these gods and also to the Yoruba version of cosmic balance in which death and life are always connected.

There is no single character who represents the terrifying Will of Ogun in the play, but since Ogun is in all humanity, each of Soyinka's characters exhibit his qualities, especially Ogun's eagerness to exercise personal will and control and the tension between creative desires and destructive powers. "*Madmen and Specialists* is an atypical Yoruba tragedy in which the tragic experience is not undergone by any one protagonist," explains Katrak (152). Instead, the tragedy is experienced, by all the characters, but without the redemption of a true, heroic artist-figure or character that is a creative force.

Just as Soyinka calls Ogun "the first actor," the mendicants are actors too. They play out scenes of torture, honouring citizens with medals, and executions; they act out what is necessary for the art of begging, including performing their infirmities, whining, and blessing donors. For example, in one scene, Aafaa takes on the persona of Dr. Bero, who he calls the Specialist. At the beginning of the scene, he is holding a "needle" very close to Goyi's crotch, as if he would stab him with it.

BLINDMAN. When the Specialist wants results badly enough...

CRIPPLE. Yes, but what results?

AAFAA. Does it matter? Say anything, say anything that comes into your head but SPEAK, MAN! (*Twisting the needle upwards).*

GOYI, hand over crotch, yells.

BLINDMAN. Rem Acu Titigisti.[13]

AAFAA. Believe me, this hurts you more than it hurts me. Or – vice versa. Truth hurts. I am a lover of truth. Do you find you also love truth? Then let's have the truth. THE TRUTH! (*He gives another push. GOYI screams.*)

CRIPPLE and BLINDMAN. Rem Acu Tetigisti.

AAFAA. Think not that I hurt you but that Truth hurts. We are all seekers after truth. I am a Specialist in truth. Now we shall push it up all the way, all the way? Or shall we have the truth all the truth. (*Another push. GOYI screams, then his head slumps.)* Hm, the poor man has fainted....Hey. (*He taps GOYI on the shoulder*) Are you recovered? Good. Here we go again.

CRIPPLE. Perhaps he needs a drink of water.

AAFAA. Really? Well, give him one, then. We are no monsters here...Satisfied? Anything else? Perhaps you would like to use the conveniences? The toilet? (*GOYI nods*). Over there. Be my guest.

GOYI turns, his hand goes to his fly, he stops, turns round slowly. A big grin appears on the faces of the other three.

AAFAA. What's the matter? No wan' pee-pee?...No more pee-pee? (230, 231)

At the end of this scene, Si Bero enters, and the mendicants drop their characters, but the viciousness of their play is unsettling because, although they are actors, the line between their performances and their reality seems very thin. There is the impression that at any moment the performance could become reality.

The mendicants are not only performers, they are destroyers: they beat and destroy one another, they abuse Si Bero, they torture and abuse Old Man, and they poke holes (to the best of their intellectual abilities) in the evil system they see operating around them. Sometimes, as in the example above, their violence is imaginary. However, near the beginning Aafaa and Blindman gets into an argument and Aafaa pretends to slap the Blindman's face:

---

[13] These are nonsense words but the acronym spells "rat" and is used in the sense of "I smell a R.A.T." (229).

He feints a slap across BLINDMAN'S face. BLINDMAN, alert, springs suddenly backwards and grasps his staff. AAFAA looks at him a moment, then bursts out laughing.

AAFAA. Do you see what I see? The man actually wants to fight me. Do you see? Did you see him? He has no eyes but he actually wants to fight. Hm? Is it really a fight you're looking for, Blind One?

Hi kicks aside his staff but BLINDMAN immediately closes in on AAFAA, reaches for his arms and imprisons them. They strain against each other. (239)

The destructive violence that characterises the mendicants does not disappear through the course of the play, because they verbally and physically abuse each other throughout the script, right up until the end when Old Man calls on them to beat the Cripple, in the section quoted earlier. Their duality as creative performers but destructive people supports Soyinka's concept of the duality of Ogun.

Bero is also enamoured with the destructiveness of Ogun's will. Once a doctor with "creative" will, he had become the Specialist for secret service who analyses, diagnoses, and prescribes death rather than cures (248). His quest for power, to impose his will on the world, dominates the play. "Bero can be seen as the dark grotesque side of Ogun, released by war" (Wright 25). Bero scorns the mendicants, his sister, and the two Earth Mothers. He claims that he "controls lives....Control belongs only to a few with aptitude" (279) and he is willing to eat human flesh because it gives him power to be able to break taboos without a conscience.

SI BERO. What are you trying to be, Bero – evil?

BERO. Does it sound that bad? It was no brain-child of mine. We thought it was a joke. I'll bless the meat, he said. And then – As Was in the Beginning, As is, Now, As Ever shall be...world without.....We said amen with a straight face and sat down to eat. Then, afterwards...

SI BERO. Yes?

BERO. He told us. (*Pause. He laughs suddenly.*) But why not? Afterwards I said, why not? What is one flesh from another? So I tried it again, just to be sure of myself. It was the first step to power you understand. Power in its purest sense. The

end of inhibitions. The conquest of the weakness of your too human flesh with all its sentiment. So again, all to myself I said Amen to his grace. (252)

Besides destroying himself as a human being, Bero tries unsuccessfully to destroy the cult of "As" because it is a power he does not understand and cannot access. Like Ogun, Bero is constantly trying to assert his will, and while he initially has fears and cannot shoot his father or the Earth Mothers, eventually he overcomes them, and kills Old Man, destroying even the bonds of kinship.

The women in the play are also like Ogun in their creative and destructive capacities. The character with whom Soyinka intends the audience to identify most is Si Bero who craves goodness, preserves traditional ways and believes in a hopeful future. The Earth Mothers teach Si Bero all of their magic arts, but when she does not fulfill her promises, they destroy her home and herbs, inflicting on her the type of justice Soyinka calls Ogun's style of "humane but rigidly restorative justice" ("Fourth" 22). The Earth Mothers also comment, "Poison has its uses too. You can cure with poison if you use it right. Or kill" (233). Si Bero carried out the other side of Ogun's creative powers. She tells Bero that in spite of all the evil she heard about in the war, she "earned the balance by carrying on [his] work. One thing cancels out another" (246). Although Yoruba balance does not occur in a single character, in this play it can almost occur between characters. But since the script does not present a balance between the dichotomy of good and evil in the script, the audience is shown how the war makes the entire world sick and causes it to tip toward the side of evil.

Prior to the development of the Yoruba pantheon, some Yoruba people were members of an even more ancient religion known as the Ogboni. Still in existence today, this other religion also figures in *Madmen and Specialists*. "The cult worships the earth because it believes in a myth that claims the earth to be the origin of everything" (Shumba 29). Although the Earth Mothers refuse to name the cult of which they are members, Si Bero's statement that she "likes to keep close to the Earth" (244), and the Earth Mothers' conversations with Bero indicate that the women could be members of the Ogboni cult. [14]

---

[14] Other possibilities exist: one critic argues that the cult is a foil for evil As and is therefore a cult of Love (Yengar 12).

BERO. And what…cult is this?

IYA AGBA.[15] Not any cult you can destroy. We move as the Earth moves, nothing more. We age as Earth ages.

BERO. But you're afraid to tell me the name.

IYA AGBA. I try to keep fools from temptation.

BERO. Watch it, old woman, your age earns no privileges with me.

IYA AGBA. Nothing does from what we hear. So you want to know what cult, do you?

BERO. I can ask your – pupil. *He turns round to go back to his house.*

IYA AGBA. She won't tell you. Take it from me. She won't. *BERO stops without turning, waits.* Your mind has run farther than the truth. I see it searching, going round and round in darkness. Truth is always too simple for a desperate mind.

BERO. I shall find out.

IYA AGBA. Don't look for the sign of broken bodies or wandering souls. Don't look for the sound of fear or the smell of hate. Don't take a bloodhound with you; we don't mutilate bodies.

BERO. Don't teach me my business.

IYA AGBA. If you do, you may find him circle back to your door.

BERO. Watch your mouth, old hag.

IYA AGBA. You want the name? But how much would it tell you, young man? We put back what we take, in one form or another. Or more than we take. It's the only law. What laws do you obey?

BERO. You are proscribed, whatever you are, you are banned.

IYA AGBA. What can that mean? You'll proscribe Earth itself? How does someone do that? (273, 274)

Generally Ogboni women are "looked upon as witches and dangerous" because, like the women in this play, they are associated with the administration of justice (Shumba 30). Yet, the Ogboni are fervently against war because spilling blood is taboo and for that reason Si Bero is extremely alarmed when she discovers that both Bero and her father killed rather than healed during the war (Shumba 70). Like Old Man, the

[15] Iya Agba is one of the Earth Mothers. The other is Iya Mate.

women are not gods, they are simply representative of powerful forces that work to keep the world in balance.

Western Thought: Christianity and Greek Philosophy

Soyinka includes Christianity and Greek philosophy, the root of Western secular thought, in *Madmen and Specialist.*[16] In an interview in 1974, Wole Soyinka was asked about his use of Greek references in his writing. He explained "There is a great deal of intercommunication in the world. A lot of people tend to forget that. As long as I find the means of expression, a form of communication which does not alienate my immediate readership and I do not deliberately cram my work with foreign references to a point where the work is indigestible..." (Soyinka, "Agetua" 35). Many Nigerians are Christian or have studied Western philosophy in school, and would be acquainted with the references.

The most central way that we encounter Christian thought and ritual is through the representation of the evil system called "As".[17] Choosing words to reference some Christian liturgies, "As Was, Is, Now, As Ever Shall be" (278), Old Man uses Christian structures to herd his disciples. They use a "biblical-style" of language when talking, in an effort to sound reverent and holy. For example, in re-working his alphabet, Aafaa uses King James Bible style phrasing such as "I am I, thus sayeth As" (259) and adapts the New Testament verse "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God" to "In the beginning was the Priesthood, and the Priesthood was one" (289). That Christian rhythms are associated with a system of evil demonstrates how something can appear good on the outside, but is actually dangerous and evil on the inside.

Christianity appears in other aspects of the narrative as well. The Cripple's dream of a miraculous healing at the hands of the Specialist is made into a mockery of Jesus' healing of the lame man when Aafaa finishes the Cripple's dream for him by

[16] Joachim Fiebach argues that elements and materials of European culture were previously imposed on Nigerians as "the natural norm" (Fiebach 270) and therefore, these aspects of culture contribute to the internal hybridity of the text. The elements can no longer be seen as purely foreign within the contemporary Nigerian context.

[17] Shumba also argues that "As" can be seen as an indication of the Yoruba belief in "recurrence", the cyclical nature of life in the world (31, 89). I disagree, and believe it represents the constant evil in humanity.

concluding "Arise, throw off thy crutches and follow me"(260). Old Man also refers to the great flood in the Old Testament: "These midgets try to re-create the Flood but they lack the power. At least God had a reason. A damnable reason but at least he had a reason" (280). Finally, there are the two Priests: Aafaa and the old Priest. Aafaa was a Priest before he went into shock from the explosions he witnessed. We do not know what kind of priest he was, but we do know that he gave blessings and said last rites over the bodies. The old Priest, on the other hand, is a poor, ineffectual counterweight to the Earth Mothers and Old Man, both of whom have more power to control lives and destinies than he does. The old priest was happy to debate cannibalism from a Christian perspective when it was purely theoretical, but when there is a hint of reality about it, he fearfully hurries off to a pretend christening rather than confront the heinous nature of the act. Christianity is not central to the play, but adds to the internal hybridity of the text.

Socratic thought is also an element in the structure of the play. Just like Socrates, Old Man teaches his disciples to think by questioning systems they might otherwise take for granted, and even uses questions as a weapon to disconcert and infuriate Bero.

BERO. Why As?
OLD MAN. Why not?
BERO. Why As?
OLD MAN. Who wants to know?
BERO. I. Why As?
OLD MAN. What's in it for you?
BERO. *I* am asking questions! Why As? (266)

Like Socrates, Old Man is accused of corrupting minds, but unlike Socrates, who was corrupting the best and brightest youths in Athens, Old Man only corrupts society's rejects: the deformed, broken mendicants. Also, like the Greek philosopher, Old Man is invited to die by poisoning.

BERO. Just now I came through that room of herbs, I saw something I recognized.
OLD MAN. Something to sap the mind? Or destroy it altogether?

BERO. It depends on the dose. I brought you some. (*He brings some berries from his pockets and drops them gently over the OLD MAN's head.*) If you ever get tired and you feel you need a nightcap like a certain ancient Greek you were so fond of quoting, just soak a handful of them in water. (277)

Although Old Man is invited to die by drinking poison, his jailer kills him in a fit of rage rather than allowing him the opportunity to commit suicide. The references to Greek philosophy, like the references to Christianity, enrich the text, but understanding them is not necessary to making sense of the play as a whole. They contribute to the internal hybridity.

Within the intercultural document and intercultural performance experience, I found Homi Bhabha's third space exists beyond the liminality of Soyinka's Fourth Stage, but also in the regions created by the hybridity. The points of connection and the gaps opened by the different philosophic systems of Western and Yoruba thought create a third space which the audience member must negotiate. In a play such as this, where perspectives are constantly questioned by the absurd style, an uninformed audience member like myself may have trouble entering the third space created by the jumble of ideas. Without the concrete cultural knowledge of Ogun and Obatala, it is impossible to see the echoed myths or the destructive/creative force at work. If the uninformed audience member does enter the third space, new meaning may be created.

Nigerian Civil War

In terms of cultural modelling, the idea of war in *Madmen and Specialists* also exposes many potential areas of slippage with its references to both a very specific war (the Nigerian-Biafran Civil War), and to twentieth-century warfare in a global sense. The differences are cultural in the sense that common experiences within people's communities may alter the way they relate to certain narratives, ideas, or images. Wole Soyinka uses images that represent wartime conditions with which most contemporary Nigerians have first-hand knowledge: torture, summary executions, and imprisonment, merely for having unpopular ideas. For people who have not lived through war, these images are unambiguous, but their impact is

necessarily different because it does not resonate with personal experience, but with second-hand knowledge through the media. Although the media confronts and bombards Canadians with brutal images of violence and war, the mediatisation of those images distances and removes them from the viewer's immediate reality. War is not part of my experience, so while I believe that Soyinka can effectively communicate his ideas to me through the play, I believe I may perceive and process the images differently than the Nigerians for whom he originally wrote the play, who have experienced war. Nevertheless, part of Soyinka's challenge is to bring the bleak horror of war to a stage in such a way that any audience is overwhelmed, sickened, and horrified by it as much as he is.

Wole Soyinka draws on his own war experiences to expose and critique the horrors of war. Prior to the beginning of the play, both Bero and Old Man leave home to support the Civil War, and they come back corrupted and transformed. The mendicants are visual reminders of the victims of war, their destroyed bodies hideously marked by land-mines, torture, battle, and other forms of destruction. In fact, Derek Wright argues, "Old Man and his disciples are surely as violently and radically transitional as anything on Soyinka's stage, whether the word 'transition' is used to describe physical metamorphosis, spiritual turmoil, or psychic disintegration" (25). During the course of the play, the mendicants regularly act out scenes which indicate how much the war has altered their lives. We are to believe that the mendicants saw each of these things happen and perhaps experienced some of them themselves. One example is the torture scene in which Aafaa takes on the role of the Specialist and drives the needle into Goyi's crotch, and another earlier scene expresses the mendicants' understanding of military justice:

GOYI. That is some brother she has. You may say he is…dutiful.

CRIPPLE. Him a dutiful son? You're crazy.

BLINDMAN. I know what he means. (*He points an imaginary gun.*) Bang! All in the line of duty! (*GOYI clutches his chest, slumps over.*)

AAFAA. Did we try him?

CRIPPLE. Resurrect, you fool. Nobody tried you yet.

AAFAA. (*in a ringing voice*). You are *accused.*

BLINDMAN. Satisfied?

CRIPPLE. Fair enough.

BLINDMAN. Bang!

GOYI slumps. (227)

Also in an effort to critique the horrors of war, the mendicants chant the Latin phrase "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" (how sweet it is to die for one's country), but they have trouble learning the phrase and Old Man lashes out at them.

OLD MAN. Decorum. Dulce et decorum…

MENDICANTS….quorum quorum quorum…

OLD MAN. God damn you. Can you learn nothing? -- corum, not quorum.

GOYI. No quorum, no quorum, that's the damned trouble.

CRIPPLE. Yes sir, you've banged the hammer on the nail.

OLD MAN. (*turning to AAFAA*). Will you tell me what these idiots are talking about?

AAFAA. They've lost me.

CRIPPLE. You've gone dense. (*Quoting the OLD MAN again*). In ancient Athens…

AAFAA. Damn, you're right. No damned quorum!

BLINDMAN. In ancient Athens, they didn't just have a quorum. Everyobody was there! That, children, was democracy.

CRIPPLE (*singing, to the tune of 'When the Saints'*).

Before I join
The saints above
Before I join
The saints above
I want to sit on that damned quorum
Before I join the saints above

Before I bid
This earth adieu
Before I bid
This earth adieu
I want my dues from that damned quorum

Before I bid this earth adieu. (276)

The above section protests the lack of democratic choice, especially during wartime.[18] Near the end of the play when Blindman (286) and Aafaa (289) make speeches in the guise of war-like politicians they critique war rhetoric and leadership through their mockery. Blindman's speech is even intended "*to be varied with topicality of time and locale*" (285) so that the audience will recognise the political rhetoric as that of people they know.

Although the speeches and games are important, the most important protest against war in *Madmen and Specialists* is "cannibalism." Intended to shock, horrify, and disgust the audience, the idea of cannibalism is Soyinka's sharply barbed critique of the war, echoing Jonathan Swift's *Modest Proposal.* In Yoruba religion "the highest sacrifice is human sacrifice for the benefit of the community" (Shumba 60),[19] and Wole Soyinka demonstrates that particular honour and its complications in his play *Death and the King's Horseman.*[20] In *Madmen and Specialists*, however, it is war that demands human sacrifice. When Aafaa is creating his "As" alphabet and cries out "H-Humanity! Humanity is the Ultimate Sacrifice to As" (268) we are struck by the broken bodies of the other mendicants who, as victims of torture or the draft, have sacrificed their human bodies to the system of war, and by Bero who has sacrificed his human heart to the Secret Service. Old Man originally conceives of cannibalism as a protest – a way of taking the effects of war to its logical ultimate conclusion. He remembers asking the officers, "what is one meat from another?" followed by "You're drooling but I am not exactly sure why. Is there really such a difference? All intelligent animals kill only for food, you know, and you are intelligent animals. Eat-eat-eat-eat-Eat!" (265) His protest backfires, however,

---

[18] This section also comments on attitudes against people of the lower classes who are not fully permitted to participate in society. The section discussing class follows this one.

[19] Human sacrifice may or may not include cannibalism. According to Laurence K. Goldman, for anthropologists today, questions about the existence of cannibalism are "passé." What remains interesting is why it is so important in cultural discourse (Goldman 3).

[20] In *Death and the King's Horseman*, the King dies before the play begins and it is the King's Horseman's duty to die and be with him in the afterworld. Through ritual and dance the Horseman (whose name is Elesin) is to fall into a deep trance, and die. Yet Elesin does not do that. When he is interrupted by the Europeans during his ritual he loses his concentration and does not die, letting down his people and his King. His son tries to do the honourable thing, and takes Elesin's place in death, while Elesin sits in jail.

because although the men present at the banquet were disgusted with themselves for eating human flesh,[21] Bero also tells Old Man that the officers wanted to torture and kill Old Man. "They wanted to kill you, mutilate you, hang you upside down then stuff your mouth with your own genitals" (267). The officers could not see the horrible irony in the protest and instead were affronted by it. The Old Man's protest effectively inspires killing rather than stopping it.

Even more devastating than the act of cannibalism itself is the fact that Bero embraces cannibalism as a means to power. According to Georges Bataille, societal taboos are usually associated with a desire to break the taboos, but "It is noteworthy that the taboo surrounding the dead has no complimentary desire running counter to the revulsion" (71). Yet Bero actually finds the act appealing. Earlier, Bero explains to Si Bero that he tries cannibalism a second time in order to end all his inhibitions (252). Bero claims that Old Man "had done him a favour" (267). In fact, Old Man acknowledges that the fact that Bero does not kill his father is "the last proof of the human in you" (265). Having crossed the line to eating human flesh, Bero is trying to reject his humanity, and as Old Man says at the end of the section above "Be contaminated" (267). The idea of cannibalism alters the idea of human sacrifice and puts the emphasis not on community benefit as in *Death and the King's Horseman*, but on the "physical gratification of individuals" (Shumba 60). In fact, Georges Bataille suggests that the physical gratification may actually become erotic for the perpetrator. "Cruelty may veer towards eroticism and similarly a massacre of prisoners may possibly end in cannibalism" (80). When Bero says, "Delicious. The balls, to be exact" (252) he is absorbing both the power gained by breaking the ultimate taboo of eating human flesh, and he is gaining cruel, erotic pleasure from it. By becoming obsessed with breaking the taboo of eating human flesh, Bero becomes the least human and most deviant character in the play.

For Soyinka's Western audience, he is feeding into racial stereotypes of blackness. By the late 19th century in Europe, cannibalism became a signifier of race and the exoticized person (Malchow 55), and "the black man's appetite became

[21] According to H.L. Malchow there is usually a double sensation associated with cannibalism, "fear of being eaten and disgust at eating" (45). Perhaps fear also entered into this equation and explains the officers' response to Old Man.

symbolic of the primitive origins of mankind – of the dark ages within us all" (Malchow 41). Even though Si Bero calls Bero an "abomination" (252) for eating human flesh, Soyinka demands that his Western audience consider whether or not they are surprised at Bero, or surprised at his sister's response to his actions. Malchow explains that "cannibalism juxtaposes in striking contrast victim and predator, innocent and depraved, sane and mad, white and black" (43). By using the image of cannibalism, Soyinka is demonstrating that his characters are becoming the "savages" the West always "knew" they were.[22] Nigerians who may be offended by the association with savagery may, at the same time, be familiar with the originally sacred status of human sacrifice. The connection between human sacrifice and cannibalism makes the sacrifice base and revolting, rather than honourable.

Soyinka disturbs and upsets his audience with the horrific idea that war could make people want to deny their own humanity. Old Man tries to show Bero the futility of his efforts to become omnipotent with the story, related earlier in this chapter, of the lightning striking, but Bero runs away. In one final bid to bestow humanity on the most inhuman of war participants, Old Man rants about everyone's common humanity in his description of the war lords. Yet because he is also play acting the part of a war lord, Old Man takes up the ritual game and gets out of control. He responds to his own comments that as a powerful person of the system of war, he is above all things that make him human, and help him to identify with humanity, and that permits him to torture other humans, or, as Old Man calls it "practise" on them. I include most of Old Man's speech below because it indicates the common humanity of all people, while bluntly showing how Bero feels that he is in a different class of person.

AAFAA. So why risk putting us here together?

OLD MAN. There is but one constant in the life of the System and that constant is AS. And what can you pit against the priesthood of that constant deity, its gospellers, its

[22] In this play cannibalism gestures at the West's stereotypes about Africans, and the Nigerians desire to negate those stereotypes. It also makes a defiant protest about the nature of war and the purpose of killing. But cannibalism itself does little else. As Frank Lestringant writes, "The trouble with cannibalism in modern Europe is that it often represents nothing but itself: an archaic regression which, for want of a better term, is described as 'bestial,' an unreasoning, inexcusable brutality which defies all new religions" (179). Cannibalism, believes Lestringant, has the capacity to mean much more, but I believe that Soyinka primarily uses it to shock and repel.

enforcement agency. And even if you say unto them, do I not know you, did I not know you in rompers, with leaky nose and smutty face? Did I not know you thereafter, know you in the haunt of cat-houses, did I not know you rifling the poor-boxes in the local church, did I not know you dissolving the night in fumes of human self-indulgence simply simply did I not know you, do you not defecate, fornicate, prevaricate when heaven and earth implore you to abdicate and are you not prey to headaches, indigestion, colds, disc displacement, ingrowing toe-nail, dysentery, malaria, flat-foot, corns and chilblains. Simply simply, do I not know you Man like me? Then shall they say unto you, I am chosen, restored, re-designated and re-destined and further further shall they say unto you, you heresiarchs of the System arguing, querying weighing puzzling insisting rejecting upon you all shall we practise, without passion – (287, 288)

When Old Man tries to kill the Cripple at the end of this game, Derek Wright suggests that since Old Man is wearing Bero's surgeon mask, he is ritualising his own death and fully expects Bero to come in and kill him at the moment he pulls the knife on the Cripple. Bero represents the powers in the system that have decided they no longer have anything in common with humanity. In any case, Bero kills his own father, but there are a variety of reasons why he may do it. It appears that Old Man is planning to kill and eat the Cripple's heart and perhaps Bero's revulsion for cannibalism and violence has returned and he feels the need to save another life. More likely, however, he actually overcomes all of his society's taboos and his own inhibitions and willingly shoots his own father. As Old Man says, he decides to "be contaminated" (267) and his abhorrent action means the Earth Mothers believe Bero is an abomination. Iya Agba tells Si Bero "I waste no strength on carrion. I leave him to earth's rejection" (290). When they set fire to the house, it is because the world has changed by the evils of war and will never be the same: "It is only the dying embers of an old woman's life. The dying embers of earth as we knew it. Is that anything to fear?" asked Iya Agba (291). As the forces of good try to prevent evil from causing more destruction by destroying it themselves, Soyinka's idea surfaces that war is a terrible evil on earth that upsets the traditional Yoruba system of balance. Although Si Bero probably survives the fire, Soyinka uses her to demonstrate the destruction of

everything sacred, traditional, hopeful, or virtuous as a result of war. As for cannibalism, his intention is clear as well: the image of cannibalism is intended to protest war by revolting the audience to such a degree that the idea of killing another human being is a complete anathema.

Class Conflict

The first theme that is important in terms of the play's interculturality is Yoruba mythologies. The earlier analysis demonstrates the different cultural worldview that needs to be understood to fully appreciate the play. The second theme is less obviously "intercultural" because it has to do with the knowledge and personal experience of war. The final important theme in *Madmen and Specialists* which presents interesting questions in terms of cultural modelling examines class relations and protest, and, in particular, the way that class intersects with the destructive capacity of war. In 1975, Soyinka told Henry Louis Gates Jr. that he thought one of the major causes of the Civil War was "lack of egalitarianism within the community." He added, "It was not merely tribal segmentation; it was, if you like, *class* segmentation" (Soyinka, "Gates" 51). Since that was Soyinka's impression, it is not surprising that Fiebach argues that a main theme running through most of Soyinka's major works "is the individual's attempt (and in conjunction with it the attempt by underprivileged strata) to keep the vision of liberating change alive, and if possible, to work on altering social structures" (Fiebach 268). This is precisely what the characters who have never held positions of power try to do in *Madmen and Specialists*. Asserting themselves, their consciousness, and their ideas, Si Bero and the mendicants, with the help of the imprisoned Old Man, try to change As, the System of evil that oppresses them. Fiebach further suggests that the balance between the individual and the community in Nigerian Yoruba pre-colonial societies also influences the way that Soyinka deals with the individual in this play and others. Fiebach claims that in pre-colonial society the balance is a "delicate dialectic constituted by the appreciation of individual excellence, prowess, and pre-eminence on the one hand, and by the imagined acceptance of social hierarchies on the other" (Fiebach 268). Appreciating individual excellence is not at all the same thing as

revering the individual will-power associated with Ogun and the strongest of Yoruba society. Finding the will of Ogun among the weak of Yoruba society may be unexpected and perhaps unwelcome, at least from the point of view of the powerful. Soyinka presents ways that relatively powerless individuals can try to fight the system that oppresses them, and explores how it can oppress them doubly in a time of chaos and war, and finally reveals how the system seems to be too powerful for them. Individually and alone, the lower classes are unable to make changes to their own lives.

Status and hierarchy are issues throughout the play. The effort to achieve the highest status and the most power occupies several of the characters in the play. Old Man retains his power by not fully revealing what he means by "As", Bero gains power through threats and violence, and the Earth Mothers gain power through history and the earth. There are some characters who may imagine that they have power, but in fact their status is very low. Aafaa tries to stand up to Si Bero, and later Bero, demanding payment in advance for work, and in each case he is unsuccessful. Si Bero also claims she has power over her brother, saying "I have the power of a mother with him" (290) but we know she has no power over her brother and his actions. In fact, as the world is turned upside down because of war, people that might be expected to have power such as the father, the Earth Mothers, and the sister, appear to have lost power. In the same way the beggars, who are physically destroyed by the war, have also lost power. As the world is turned upside down, Si Bero and the mendicants represent the despised and the powerless.

In order to protest against the way women are treated as lower class members of society, Soyinka uses Si Bero. He demonstrates that she is intelligent, devoted to traditional ways, and dutiful as a sister and a daughter by showing her hard work with the Earth Mothers, and demonstrating how much she is worried about her missing family members. In spite of her intelligence and care, she is scorned by her brother and by the mendicants. Although she tries to assert herself, her efforts are futile. Bero treats her like a child by scolding her, even though she expanded and improved his medical practice in his absence.

SI BERO. We heard terrible things. So much evil. Then I would console myself that I earned the balance by carrying on your work.[...]

BERO. You really disappoint me. You are supposed to be intelligent. It was you I asked to do my work, not some stupid old hags. (246)

Bero also refuses to allow Si Bero the opportunity to question or think after he starts telling the Priest about his cannibalistic experiments. Bero says to her,

BERO. Out of your world, little sister, out of your little world. Stay in it and do only what I tell you. That way you'll be safe...I thought I told you to stay in your little world! Go and take tea with the senile pastor or gossip with your old women. Don't come out from where you're safe." (252)

Later he says for a third time, "I've told you, leave the thinking to me. Stay in your little world and continue the work I set you" (269). Since Bero is so cruel to everyone, an audience might think that there was nothing particularly critical about women's issues in Soyinka's premise. But in fact, other characters in the play also refuse to acknowledge Si Bero as a full human being. Aafaa calls her "the little woman" (261) and says "she's a witch" (228), while Goyi explains that "everyone knows she's mad. They get that way after living alone...Just let an old woman live by herself for a short while and she gets up to all sorts of things" (228), and the Cripple agrees "she must be slightly crazy. Living all alone, I suppose" (236) Meanwhile, even the quality of her medical work is questioned by the priest who insists that the ointment she gave him while her brother was gone was "Not quite the same thing, young lady, not quite the same thing" (249).

SI BERO. It was the same one he made before he left.

PRIEST. No, no, I could tell the difference. Oh yes, I could tell.

SI BERO. It was the same.

PRIEST. Good of you to try, but no. You just didn't make it the same. I could tell the difference at once. (249)

At every step of the way, Si Bero is put down, mocked, and caged. Even though she pleads with the Earth Mothers to preserve her brother's life, he treats her badly. She may be the only one who survives the fire, but the hopeless tone of the play seems to indicate that she can have no future in which she is respected, because as a woman she

is despised. Soyinka demonstrates that with the world out of balance, nothing in the world is right. Therefore, he seems to suggest that for the world to be in balance, Si Bero and other women would have to be treated with respect.

Even more despised by everyone in the play are the mendicants, who are grotesquely crippled in body and spirit, lice-infested and often hungry, and who even despise each other. Aafaa throws out insults regularly such as "blind fool" (228), "you freaks", and "you illiterate reptile" (285), while Cripple calls Goyi a "Nitwit", and Blindman says Aafaa talks "plenty of nonsense," (228). Even Si Bero, the kindest person in the play, who gives the beggars money, work, and food, insults them all, especially Aafaa. She picks on his mother, she says the herbs are not "half as dirty as your anus" (238), and she reduces them all to objects when she says "Who? These?" (252) She even resorts to name calling, saying, "Shut up you loathsome toads!" (255). One would think that Old Man would at least offer a measure of respect to his disciples. Although he says, "A part of me identifies with every human being," he calls them "stupes" (275) and "damnable warts" (290) and shouts that they are too stupid to learn anything (276). Perhaps the clearest picture of how the mendicants are despised by their society as the lowest living things comes from Dr. Bero. He is furious at his father who was supposed to teach the war-wounded simple rehabilitation skills such as basket weaving and "Instead he began to teach them to think, think, THINK! Can you picture a more treacherous deed than to place a working mind in a mangled body?" (253). Objectified, reviled, and not permitted to think, the mendicants are the lowest status of all the people represented in the play. Just as women are reviled in this vision of a world out of balance that Soyinka presents, so are the poor, deformed beggars. But for the world to be in balance, functioning the way it should, it seems that Soyinka believes that people like the mendicants should also be given the opportunity to fully participate in society. For that to happen, the current operating System would need to be destroyed.

Strangely, one of the tenets that Old Man tries to teach his disciples while exploring the doctrine of "As" is to despise themselves. "Disgust is cheap," he says, "I asked for self-disgust" (271). When Old Man decides that it is wrong to teach occupational therapy skills such as basket weaving to the people crippled by a war

waged by the state, he does so because he believes it is more important to teach the war- wounded to think, and hopefully, hate the war that did this to them.[23] Old Man believes that if people have no sense of their own worth, then in a sense they have power over their tormentors because the tormentors cannot hurt them. Through self-disgust they can hate the maimed person they have become, and therefore, hate the system he calls "As" that allows human mutilation to happen. Soyinka uses Old Man to critique war by focusing on the devastating results of war. Since Old Man will not permit his students to accept what they have become, they must hate its causes, giving Soyinka a way to voice his opinions against war and poor leadership.

Possibly because they have been taught to think, or possibly because even the very lowest of humanity cannot be reduced to nothing, the mendicants do try to speak back against leadership and the system in this play in more ways than Si Bero ever does. Yet Soyinka demonstrates that each time they try to speak, they are ridiculed and abused. Blindman expresses his good opinion of Si Bero to her brother, and is told to shut up (240). Aafaa asserts to Bero, "You can't specialise in everything you know," and "You know nothing Dr. Bero. You can't bluff me" (241), but he is quickly beaten across the face with Bero's swagger stick (242). The two characters who most begin to absorb the self-disgust that Old Man demands are Goyi and the Cripple, who have the lowest status in the play. Neither has advanced very far in education, while there are hints that prior to the war, Blindman was a lawyer, and Aafaa was a priest. Goyi, the weakest, and the least able to speak back, is the subject of most of the abuse, such as name calling, bad gambling deals, mock execution and castration.[24] In fact, his sense of his status is so low that he even says, "we are not much use to anyone" (240). Soyinka bleakly uses the mendicants to represent that people who have lost so much through the war may be the least able to protest their treatment, and worse, people may be the least willing to listen to them.

---

[23] Ketu Katrak explains that only by loathing their situation can the mendicants and other war wounded survive (155). Although they have very little power to make choices, the can choose whether or not to hate the situation, and if they choose to hate it, then the people who forced them into it do not have power over them because they are not complacent.

[24] The bad gambling deals, mock execution, and castration are all part of the dangerous play acting that the mendicants do.

Soyinka uses the Cripple a little bit differently. Through the Cripple, he demonstrates how hope and dreams are shattered by war, and how even the people who hate the war can be corrupted by its influence when they feel that they are beginning to lose power or influence. Although the Cripple seems to absorb much of Old Man's teachings, he also says that Old Man taught him to see beyond his expectations. When he describes how Old Man made him crazy, he says, "And getting me all choosy!...Beggars can't be choosers, we all knew that" (254). Daring to imagine possibilities beyond his immediate circumstances, he admits that the only reason he continues to work for the Specialist is that he dreams that someday Dr. Bero will make him walk again (260). And finally, the Cripple coins the song which includes the lines "I want to sit on that damned quorum" and "I want my dues from that damned quorum" (276) showing that he believes he deserves a voice in democracy, and refuses to be a completely anonymous piece of the faulty System that Old Man has taught him to question. At the end of the play, the Cripple dares to ask a question during Old Man's final rant, and Cripple may possibly die for it. In the dark pessimism of this play, even the despised mendicants who are taught to think are destroyed before they are allowed to really use the tools they acquire. Soyinka uses women and beggars, who have very low status in society and for whom life is already very difficult, to demonstrate that terrible things can and do get worse, but also to indicate that in order for things to be better, these lower class members of society would have to have a measure of power and a voice.

Conclusions:

Madmen and Specialists deviates from Patrice Pavis's unidirectional path because the interculturality of the play works in two directions: Wole Soyinka absorbs, appropriates, and alters Western performance structures and ideologies to create his play, while at the same time drawing on his Yoruba roots, religion, history, as well as his recent experiences in Nigeria. Much of the complexity of the play can be lost, and only a surface understanding of plot and character is possible, without a grasp of Yoruba mythology, the Biafran Nigerian Civil War, and class struggle. The tension created by the internal hybridity of the script at the source culture of 1960s Nigeria

creates a transitional space or third space for the target culture of 2001 Toronto. By locating the play within the source Nigerian context, the script reveals a world otherwise unknown to the much of the target culture. Presumably, the source culture audience would not need the various footnotes and explanations I have provided here of symbols and ideas in the play because the ideas and references would be familiar. Therefore, *Madmen and Specialists* is be a hybrid document, carrying with it the internal tension of third space created at the margins of different philosophies, world views and socio-political experiences. As a result of the tension created between familiar and foreign for a target culture audience, the text opens the way for the target culture to enter into a third space.

Perspective of the adapters and their work of adaptation

In the previous section I adopted the role of dramaturge and discussed artistic and cultural modellings that might be perceived as foreign to the Canadian environment and Canadian experience. The next filter in the "hourglass" asks a creative team to consider methods to "to convey a foreign culture to our western tradition" (14), or in other words, how the adapters will choose to present foreign material, such as the ideas discussed in the previous section, on the stage. In an interview, Wole Soyinka explains that when a director is dealing with material that is foreign to the audience:

> The work of a director principally involves responsibility towards the audience…When he moves a play from one area to another, the director seeks certain symbols, certain representational images in order to facilitate – because you're encapsulating the history of a people within a couple of hours…it's the responsibility of the director to try to transmit the metaphors within that particular language, the visual images, in terms which cannot be too remote (Soyinka, "Agetua" 132).

Besides conveying a foreign culture to a Western audience, this filter also deals with a second concern. Pavis argues that because a unifying point of view about the foreign is impossible, "the result is relativism in concepts of culture and the real" (14). When culture and the real are relativised, they lose their specificity and strength to make statements about identity or ideas. Theatre practitioners need to find ways to make the performance both meaningful and relevant to the foreign audience without

generalising and universalising. Finding the right mix between effective communication of the foreign and relativising meaning presents a major challenge to a director embarking on an intercultural project.

In this section of my thesis, I will be performing the role of "researcher" by describing what the directors, designers, and actors did during this part of the theatre transfer process; and I will occasionally take the role of director and indicate what I think effective choices might have been.

Since this section of the "hourglass" deals with the director, designers, actors, and spectators, not just the script, Salman Rushdie's concept of translated persons is especially important. He suggests that migrants, having been both born and borne across the world, become translated people in their new location (17). In other words, their own identities become foreign to themselves as they are constantly redefined by others. By Rushdie's definition, director Tony Adah is a translated person, because although he is working in Canada, he is a Nigerian citizen. His various international experiences influence the way he positions himself and his foreignness in relation to the Canadian audience and the Nigerian script. As Trinh T. Minh-ha writes, "the meanings of here and there, home and abroad, third and first, margin and centre keep on being displaced according to how one positions oneself" (Trinh, "Other than" 20). Depending on where Adah positions himself, the performance may be more Nigerian or it may be more Canadian, more foreign, or more familiar. His background and experiences also inform the way Canadians redefine him in Canada. When Adah looks at the way Canadians see him, he sees his foreignness, and for that reason, he becomes translated and redefined in his new community. Thus, in this case, the linearity of movement along Patrice Pavis's "hourglass of cultures" is disrupted because Adah is bridging both the source and target cultures, and is himself translated in the process of coming to Canada. As an adaptor, his ideas about foreignness are informed by what he believes Canadians see as foreign about his own background.

Two questions arise for me when discussing the foreign in Tony Adah's production process. First, what did Adah believe Canadians would perceive as foreign in the script? Second, how did he choose what foreign things to illuminate for the audience, and what did he choose to keep foreign to maintain specificity? As Pavis

points out, merely the perception of otherness is not enough to facilitate the cultural exchange. "The adaptor must choose tactics; he will judge culture sometimes from within (including himself) and sometimes from without (excluding himself), choosing to...accentuate the differences from his culture or to erase them, to individuate or particularize it or to look for universals..." ("Interculturalism" 62). As a translated person, Adah's choices are complicated by the fact that he is always both within and without the foreign and target cultures.

When Tony Adah was considering the foreign elements in *Madmen and Specialists,* he was concerned about Canadian expectations of an African play: "People have the idea that because it is African it should be easy, with song and dance, and, of course, *Madmen and Specialists* isn't like that."[25] Adah believes the script is a difficult one, no matter where it is performed.[26] He complains that, "people are willing to make the effort into understanding Shakespeare... and there are cultural impediments there... but they are not [willing to put effort] into other texts." Wole Soyinka made a similar comment in an interview: "I'm irritated when people from outside my world say they find it difficult to enter my world. It's laziness, it's intellectual laziness...especially today when communication is a matter of course....I think the barrier is self-induced. 'This is a world of the exotic, we can not enter it'" (Appiah 131). Neither Soyinka nor Adah believe that culture should be a barrier when entering the world of *Madmen and Specialists*, but as I will demonstrate, sometimes foreign elements can become barriers to understanding.

Adah wanted the audience to make the effort to enter the Nigerian world of the play. As a result, even though Adah acknowledged the intellectual difficulty of the script, he chose not focus his efforts on transferring the play's more abstract cultural modellings. This choice can cause confusion for an unprepared audience. For example, when I watched Adah's production of *Madmen and Specialists,* I was unfamiliar with the myths of Ogun and Obatala that would have enhanced my

---

[25] All quotes from Tony Adah come from an interview we had in Edmonton on March 11, 2002, unless otherwise specified.

[26] Critics also agree that the play is challenging: Martin Banham writes "at first the play was hard to come to grips with, inhabitied as it is by stranged and tortured creatures existing in a half world of darkness and threat ("Darkness" 125) while almost ten years later Wole Ogundele writes "*Madmen and Specialists* is one of those unique plays that, either on the stage or in the privacy of one's reading rooms, perplexes even as it fascinates" (43).

appreciation of the narrative. I was also confused about what attitude to adopt towards the Earth Mothers. In our interview, I asked Adah if a Nigerian audience would have thought the Earth Mothers represented good forces when they first came on stage. He said "yes"; however as an unprepared audience member, I found the Earth Mothers confusing.

In a play where the world is turned upside down because of the war, I believe it is important to understand the normal order. As Homi Bhabha suggests, "culture" is only a problem "at the point at which there is a loss of meaning in the contestation and articulation of everyday life" (*Location* 34). It was in the articulation of that which was commonplace for a Nigerian but was unfamiliar to me that I lost my way in the performance. Tony Adah identifies the intellectual challenges in the script, but did not examine how some of these challenges could be compounded by foreign metaphors and artistic and cultural modellings. Furthermore, as a translated person, it was difficult for him to identify what Canadians may perceive as foreign, and what they may perceive as intellectually challenging. Adah may not have realised how confusing and overwhelming the foreignness could be for a Canadian audience, or perhaps, since his target audience was the well-informed conference attenders, he may have assumed everyone would have more background knowledge than I did. Of course, it is not essential that each audience member take away the same things from a performance, nor that they should understand all elements the same way, but the director should have goals and intentions.

The second choice a director has to make is what elements of the script should be used to maintain local specificity, and what foreign elements to clarify or relativise for the audience. Since Adah wanted to locate the play specifically within Nigeria, it is not surprising that he chose to relativise very little. In other words, he rarely chose to equate one Nigerian thing with a different Canadian one. Instead, he focused on providing as much "real" detail as possible, such as the "authentic" hairstyles and building styles. The choice certainly is not the only one an adapter could make: Annemarie Heywood argues that "*Madmen and Specialists* is not anchored to any specific locale: it could be set in the hinterland of any modern ideological war... [the characters] are modern archetypes and could be translated into any location"

(Heywood 48), and Shumba writes that "since Soyinka sees the war in terms of human nature, the ideas expressed have relevance to humanity in general," (Shumba v). While there are some barriers to cross-cultural understanding, the story and its themes could indeed take place outside of Nigeria. When members of the Drama Centre at the University of Toronto were initially selecting the script, Adah was encouraged, although not asked outright, to use a white cast. A white cast may have emphasised the transferability of many of the play's themes, and may also have eased the challenges of finding black actors. However, Adah felt that casting white actors would make the play seem dislocated. Although many of his actors were unsuited to the performance for various reasons, such as age or ability, he still insisted on maintaining an all-black cast.

Nevertheless, Adah made different choices regarding the war theme, which he believed resonated with contemporary ideological war issues. He and his assistant director, Resh Budhu, adapted Blindman's war speech to echo President George Bush Jr's "War on Terror" rhetoric that dominated the news after the September 11th terrorist attacks in the month leading up to the performance.[27] Adah did not think localising and contemporising the speech detracted from the image of the Nigerian Civil War. He wanted the insanity of war to resonate with audiences across cultures. Although Adah was not interested in relativising the cultural location of the script, he wanted to make the idea of war's madness speak across cultural boundaries.

Tony Adah's choices in directing *Madmen and Specialists* were influenced by his position in Canada as a translated person. He is aware of how he and his Africanness are redefined by the Canadian public, but he seems unaware of some of the Nigerian cultural nuances that inform the way he thinks about Nigeria and theatre.[28] The importance he laid on accurate cultural specificity, and on locating the play in Nigeria, demonstrates that he may have been thinking about the knowledgeable conference participants he saw as his target audience. Nevertheless, although he allowed his adaptation to make intense demands on the audience from the perspective

---

[27] Unfortunately, I was not able to get a copy of the adaptation.

[28] Adah told me that during the rehearsal process he was sometimes surprised about the things people found confusing. He also explained that some of his attitudes about how to rehearse a play did not work as well in Canada as they did in Nigeria. However, he was surprised by the differences.

of cross-cultural translation, he did make concessions to the uninformed public by making the war theme transfer to the present-day War on Terror in an effort to make the war theme more clearly resonate across cultures.

Preparatory Work of the Actors

The next "hourglass" filter deals with the preparatory work of the actors. Patrice Pavis explains that all actors "are impregnated by formulas, habits of work, which belong to the anthropological and sociological codifications of their milieu... which are in reality omnipresent and can be easily picked up and parodied" (*Crossroads* 16). A black cast and authentic Nigerian visual details may help, but "[t]heatre translation," argues Pavis, "is never where one expects it to be: not in words, but in gestures, and in the 'social body,' not in the letter"("Towards" 156). Rustom Bharucha also writes "what kind of 'life' gets transmitted through its presence on stage, is open to being questioned" (*Politics* 70), and he calls theatre translation a "sympathetic, variable, and psychophysical act" (*Politics* 70). For the actors to bring "life" to the stage, they must not merely speak words from a foreign culture, but must find ways to support the expression of those words with their bodies. This means that they may need to adopt unfamiliar physical gestures, postures, or ways of moving on the stage. It may also mean that they must recognise when they are doing something particularly North American, and that in those cases, the action should enhance the communication of an idea that may not be clear simply from the text. In this section, I am again acting as an outside researcher, observing in hindsight what occurred, and making comments about how things could have been done differently.

Tony Adah's cast was exceptionally diverse, including American, Canadian, Caribbean, Nigerian, and Sudanese cast members. As for training, one woman had performed with Caribbean playwright and director Derek Walcott, and there were two drama students and a film studies student, although none of these was an actor. The performers had probably internalized much of North American "naturalistic" performance style simply by seeing plays and watching movies. The cultural differences within the cast would have also brought a variety of other performance experiences to the rehearsal process, but the dominant one that appeared on stage was

a familiar Western, "fourth wall" theatre acting style, in which the actors pretend that the spectators do not exist and that they are protected by an invisible wall between themselves and the audience, while the audience are invited to observe the action as silent voyeurs. Even though he could have done otherwise, Adah chose to structure the performance so that the actors in *Madmen and Specialists* never stepped out of the world they created on stage, never spoke directly to the audience, and always carried on with their business as if the only people around were their fellow actors, who were, like them, in character.

In bringing Nigeria to life through the actors' bodies, Adah primarily concerned himself with singing and dancing. Though *Madmen and Specialists* is entirely in English, Adah could have made the actors learn Nigerian accents, and could have used local accents to help emphasise class and education differences between the characters in the play. Instead, language and accent became a site of unintentional hybridity. Trinh T. Minh-ha writes, "language can only live on and renew itself by hybridizing shamelessly and changing its own rules as it migrates in time and space" ("Other than" 14). As if it had a life beyond the production, language expression in the Toronto performance was "shamelessly" hybridized in multiple ways because the actors had a wide range of accents of their own: American, Canadian, Caribbean (various islands), Nigerian, and Sudanese. Dr. Bero, Si Bero, and Old Man did not sound like they had ever lived in the same house, and the mendicants seemed to come from all over the world. Hybridity within the actors' speech meant there were different rhythms and different emphasis than Soyinka had probably originally imagined, but the different accents meant that the words were spoken in a fresh way, "living and renewing itself" in a foreign setting.

The actor's body is usually the most important sign on the stage – more important than set, costume, or accent. Adah was astounded to learn that Canadians have mastered a different technique of learning to sing songs and dance than he was accustomed to in Nigeria. In Nigeria both arts are always learned at the same time, whereas in Canada, the singing is learned separately from the dancing, then the two are put together. Wole Soyinka explains in his essay "The Fourth Stage" that "it is 'unmusical' to separate Yoruba musical form from myth and poetry" ("Fourth" 25).

There is even a Nigerian proverb that says "It is hearing that makes the dance" (Adah). It had not occurred to Adah that his actors would need to make an effort to put the play into their bodies, or that teaching them to dance would be difficult. Because of this challenge, only the actors who actually performed the dance on stage learned the piece. In Nigeria, he would have required all the actors to learn the songs and dances whether they would be performing it on stage or not, because it would be part of the rehearsal process. In Canada, he chose not to because it was so much more challenging for the actors to learn the songs and dances.

The actors' preparation was influenced both by their past experiences with acting, and by the fact that those experiences were very different from Adah's expectations coming from Nigeria. Pavis asserts that "extensive preparation on the part of the actors is indispensable for this stage by stage cultural transfer" ("Interculturalism" 64). Adah's decision to adopt a Western acting style, allowing the actors to use the acting tools they already had and avoiding the issue of accents, demonstrates how easily the transfer of foreignness can be interrupted, and altered into a more intercultural rehearsal process and performance product.

The Theatrical Representation of Culture and the Use of Reception Adaptors

This filter is concerned with how a foreign culture is transmitted, and how parts of culture can be communicated on stage. The filter described in the section titled "Perspective of the Adapters" shows how the adapter tries to ascertain what is foreign about the script. Here, the adapter tries to communicate effectively those foreign elements and the idea of foreignness. Pavis explains that "theatricality offers specific means for transferring source culture to a target audience" ("Interculturalism" 65). Elements of the mise en scène such as costume, set design, and performance style can be used to indicate that something is foreign, and can be used to isolate and illuminate abstract foreign concepts. In this section, I present the research information, but I also position myself as an audience member, and talk about my own reactions to the performance.

In Tony Adah's production of *Madmen and Specialists,* the focus was on visual images that would root the play within the specific socio-historic circumstances

of 1970s Civil War Nigeria. Adah wanted to evoke the idea of rural Nigeria, and he also wanted to represent the particular time period. "It is naïve," agrees Rustom Bharucha, "if not irresponsible to assume that meaningful confrontation of any culture can transcend the immediacies of its history" (*Theatre* 1). To reinforce the Nigerian world for those who were knowledgeable, and to evoke the imaginary for those members of his audience, who were, like myself, culturally ignorant, Adah chose to emphasise costumes and set design.

The costume designs strongly evoked West Africa. The women wore brightly coloured fabrics and were barefoot; the mendicants were in ragged, darkly coloured clothes; the priest was dressed in a ridiculously formal suit; Old Man had a loose, white tunic; and Bero wore military dress the entire time. Yet from those costumes, I could not have guessed where in West Africa the play was set. Adah told me that Rosa Fracassa, the Italian-Canadian costume designer, believed that it was enough to evoke the idea of West Africa with the costumes, rather than specifically representing rural Nigeria. Originally, she wanted to use some Ghanaian garments she had found, and she designed elaborate turban-style headpieces for the women to wear. I do not know if her designs were based on research or her imagined idea of West Africa, but Adah demanded she find Nigerian costumes instead, and rejected the headpieces. He found members of Toronto's Nigerian community who lent the actors Nigerian clothes. Adah also insisted on beaded hair styles more appropriate to the Nigerian countryside. This is the part of the "hourglass of cultures" where Pavis believes theatre practitioners risk ethnocentrism (*Crossroads* 16). It would have been easy for a non-Nigerian director to accept Fracassa's designs because they would probably have seemed evocative enough. However, that may have been insulting to the Nigerians in the audience who could see that the costume designer was stereotyping West Africans. Adah admitted that although a Canadian like me would not have recognised the difference between the Nigerian or Ghanaian designs, there were some people in the audience who were better informed, and it was important to him to locate the play as much as possible in Nigeria.

Adah said that the set designing process was also frustrating because he felt he was confronted by a non-Nigerian performance space which compromised his ability

to represent the Nigerian world of the play. Hart House Theatre in Toronto was built in 1919 and has an ornate, picture frame style proscenium arch stage. Adah told me that *Madmen and Specialists* should be performed on an open stage or even theatre in the round, since fourth wall theatre is less common in Nigeria.[29] While Adah was able to insist on specifically Nigerian costume designs, he had no choice about the play's performance venue, and had to adapt his requirements. Instead he focused on what he called "authentic" Nigerian styles for the buildings on stage. There were straw huts with a particularly Nigerian roof shape, and a front porch typical of a wealthier house. That was replaced in the second act by the long staircase entering the prison in the basement. The first act worked better than the second because the high ceiling on the arch gave the impression of a bright, empty sky. But in the second act, in spite of cooler, dimmer lighting, the prison felt open and spacious instead of cramped, damp, and empty. Despite Adah's wish to represent Nigeria on the stage at all times, in the second act he did not achieve his goal: the action appeared as though it could have been anywhere because there was nothing to anchor it in the realm of the foreign.

While costume and setting, as concrete indicators of period and location, are included in the filter "cultural and artistic modelling," it is the more abstract cultural elements identified in that section that are much more difficult to translate to a foreign stage. Pavis argues that theatre is very well suited to presenting abstract cultural concepts because it can show and represent in so many ways and in so many different ways at the same time. When Pavis was describing Peter Brook's *Mahabharata*, he wrote, "Translating the untranslatable means finding gestures, atmosphere, the symbolic actions, which concretely enact a concept as abstract and untranslatable as *Dharma*" ("Interculturalism" 65).[30] *Dharma* is complicated, and so are Soyinka's concepts of Yoruba tragedy and the creative/destructive force of Ogun. Since these ideas are multi-faceted, important, and difficult to represent, Pavis argues that theatre

[29] Michael Etherton argues that certain styles of theatres may exclude African audiences, and lauds the theatre companies who choose to tour their shows to rural communities. He also comments that there is a move to design theatres that support specifically "African style" theatre (70,71). When Soyinka directed *Madmen and Specialists* at the Arts Theatre at Ibadan, he was forced to use a proscenium arch stage. To combat the picture frame effect he constructed three levels on the stage, visible at all times. (Soyinka, "Zimbabwe" 114).

[30] Miriam Webster, Oxford English Dictionary, and Wordsmyth all define the word differently using combinations of duty, moral law, truth, nature, and right path.

needs "reception-adapters" that facilitate the passage of ideas from one world to another. These adaptors are related to the process of translation, in that they comprise gestures, atmosphere, symbolic actions, and other theatrical devices that can be used to concretely represent foreign, abstract ideas on stage. The target culture adaptors always have the ethnocentric position (which can distort ideas and images as they are used) because they are supposed to help model some key elements of the source culture and "make one aware of differences" (*Crossroads* 16). The only way to do that is to admit that there is difference, to point out the difference, then to find a way of representing what that difference means to a culturally ignorant audience. To put this idea into practice in the production of *Madmen and Specialists,* abstract ideas needed to be concretely presented. For example, there should be concrete representation of the Yoruba tragedy of separation between God and humanity. The knowledgeable might see this tragedy working in Bero's destructive quest for God-like power and in Si Bero's contrary quest for goodness and traditional ways, but the uninformed cannot make the essential connections. Somehow, the intercultural theatre practitioner needs to find a way to represent significant abstract concepts on the stage. I did not feel that Tony Adah took sufficient steps to present the foreign abstract ideas concretely that are embedded in the script.

Madmen and Specialists is a difficult play, even without the challenges of unfamiliar metaphors and worldviews. Elements of Theatre of Cruelty, Theatre of the Absurd, and the complicated wordplay in Old Man's speeches already make it difficult for an audience to determine precisely what is happening. Since the play already destabilizes reality and unbalances truth, as an audience member, I needed Adah's production to include "reception adapters" to keep me from getting lost in the early stages of the plot where I was uncertain whether my confusion stemmed from the unfamiliar and foreign elements on stage, or whether it stemmed from the intentionally confusing and upsetting nature of the script. Besides needing to know whether the Earth Mothers were normally good characters, I wondered if Nigerians generally respect the military or not, and whether beggars usually serve the social function of giving blessings in Nigeria. I needed to know if or when something was unbalanced, unexpected or otherwise different from the way one would expect things to be in the

source culture. Since the source culture was foreign to me, I was ill-equipped to recognise differences from the cultural norm. Yet Adah's production did not include any clues or answers to these questions. As for the very abstract ideas such as the duality of Ogun, or the echoes of Obatala's Passion play, these were completely lost on me. Pavis suggests one reception adapter could be a narrator. Another could be program notes. In a play as challenging this one, I believe such devices would be very helpful, and it would be important for directors to consider other creative ways of clarifying foreign concepts for an uninformed audience member. Even though it is ultimately my job as an audience member to enter into the foreign world of the play, I believe that spectators I would have benefited from some tools to negotiate the world of the play.

Readability

The issues I described in the section above are related to the challenges of "readability." Tony Adah's production did not have high readability for unprepared audience members, in part because of the destabilizing nature of the script, and in part, because he did not recognise the foreign elements that may pose intercultural communication challenges. Without a reasonably high level of readability, the target audience cannot use the play to enter a third space of cross-cultural dialogue with the source.

Pavis explains, "everything implies that the target culture can impose its way of 'seeing and reading' the texts" ("Interculturalism" 67). In other words, if Adah had effectively employed some reception adaptors, the audience might have found the play easier to "read," but they would ultimately have to use their own cultural background and experiences to give meaning to the text. For example, no matter how clearly a director indicated that the Earth Mothers were good characters with a positive influence on the world, an audience member who firmly believed that witches and witchcraft were bad may not have been able to see them in a favourable way. On the other hand, if it became clear to the audience that, like Obatala, Old Man was shaping the lives of the mendicants by shaping their minds, the audience may have had more sympathy for the character. Since Adah believed it was the audience's responsibility

to enter the world of the play without assistance, he did not employ reception adaptors to bridge the intercultural gaps.

Reception adapters operate as sites of intercultural translation or even as translation devices. Susan Bennett asks, "Can audiences for whom a work has been 'translated' realize the complexity of negotiations, the layers of interpretation, that have necessarily preceded it appearing their mother tongue?" (200). I could not see those layers in Adah's production. Since Adah is a translated person himself, he may have been unable to recognise Nigerian cultural elements that Canadians might identify as foreign. Although the play was originally written in English, many cultural elements were not translated through the performance to ensure a higher level of readability. How could a Canadian know whether Bero's patronizing attitudes towards his sister were part of a commonly accepted cultural behaviour that Soyinka wishes to critique, or whether those attitudes represented how war had so corrupted Bero that he even treats his sister with contempt? Ensuring that the use of reception adapters is visible rather than hidden may be beneficial to an audience because in that way, audience members are able to acknowledge that they are being assisted in their understanding. It may also be important for the audience to realise that the adapters have chosen not to provide reception adapters for certain foreign concepts because they are too complicated, and that the Canadian audience will simply witness a performance whose meaning is less densely foreign. Part of achieving a high level of readability may require audiences to acknowledge that they are not receiving all the foreign elements in the text. Perhaps it is as important for the audience to see the "complexity of negotiations" and "the layers of interpretation" that demonstrate foreignness, as it is for them to understand the intended meaning fully.

Given and anticipated consequences

When translating a work to a foreign culture, directors should have goals concerning what the audience will receive and what their reaction might be. Adah wanted the audience to consider issues that were prominent in his mind at the time of his direction, such as "war with all of the rhetoric of inevitability associated with it," and the "condition of the national bourgeoisie" in African countries where the rich

have become oppressors of their own people in the same way that Europeans once oppressed Africans. Yet I came away instead with a sense of the foreign country, of struggles between people for power, of the abuse of women, and some confusion about magic, warfare, and cannibalism in the play. The ideas were so foreign that I often had no way of entering the world of the play. Yet perhaps a director of *Madmen and Specialists* may not believe it is desirable for the communication to be clear and the metaphors readily accessible. A production certainly has not failed if the meaning is not entirely transparent. Trinh T. Minh-ha said "I may stubbornly turn around a foreign thing or turn it around to play with it, but I respect its realms of opaqueness. Seeking to perforate meaning by forcing my entry or breaking it open to dissipate what is thought to be its secrets seems to me as crippled an act as verifying the sex of an unborn child by ripping open the mother's womb" (*Woman* 48). Soyinka's play is so overwhelmingly violent, destructive, and bleak, without any illusions of hope or indications that there may be positive change, that it is difficult to foreground any issues he presents about humanity other than those directly related to war. Pavis explains that "spectators are the final and only guarantors of the culture which reaches them, whether it be foreign or familiar....everything depends on what the spectator has remembered and forgotten....in perpetual mutation, it passes through selective amnesia." (Pavis, *Crossroads* 19).

Conclusions

Analysing Wole Soyinka's *Madmen and Specialists* by using Patrice Pavis's "hourglass of cultures" and Tony Adah's October 2001 performance of the play in Toronto reveals several important things about the script and about Pavis' "hourglass" model.

Although Adah's production did not negotiate all the filters in Patrice Pavis' "hourglass," he is not entirely at fault since the script itself is so difficult. The complicated plot structure, and elements of absurdity and cruelty alone would be enough to make this a difficult play to produce. Thematically the play is also very difficult because the overwhelmingly bleak outlook concludes with the annihilation of everything good, including Si Bero's hard work to become a traditional medicine

practitioner, and the Cripple's growing confidence in his right to question the world around him. As well, *Madmen and Specialists* is a significantly hybrid text because of Soyinka's combined use of Western performance structures, Socratic thought, and Christian mythology, along with Yoruba mythology, the Nigerian civil war, and Soyinka's own imprisonment experience.

By transferring the play to a foreign culture the director must consider how to transfer cultural specificities and abstract ideas to a foreign culture. For a non-Nigerian audience, the hybridity creates a tension within the text that opens up Homi Bhabha's concept of third space, which may or may not be negotiated by the target culture audience. Bhabha writes that performing difference results in the presentation of neither "One nor the Other but *something else besides, in-between*" (*Location* 218). The existence of hybridity within the intercultural theatre process does not fit into the linear nature of the "hourglass of cultures," but by using the "hourglass," it is possible to identify places where the process or the production is becoming "something else besides." The tool also serves to identify where decisions about foreignness need to be made.

The production process highlights how perceptions of the "familiar" and the "foreign" influence all the project participants including the artistic team, the actors, and the audience. Each person needs to take risks to enter the communication space created by the play. The director can use the "hourglass" to identify moments to relativise, to retain cultural specificity, to teach new performance skills, to illuminate or obscure meaning, to reach out to the audience, or to block their entrance into the intercultural, third space. Pavis' "hourglass" clearly demonstrates that conscious choices must be made because as the production travels from source to target, there will be impact regardless of whether the choices are intentional or not. Yet even the most intentional direction cannot factor in all of the cultural perceptions that the audience members bring with them to the theatre. While the audience must make an effort to negotiate the spaces in a play from an unfamiliar culture, the director should be sensitive to those difficulties and provide tools and metaphors in the production that will clarify the ideas.

Even though Pavis's "hourglass of cultures" may not perfectly suit the world of multiple ethnoscapes where foreign and local are not easy to identify, the model adequately illuminates artistic and cultural concerns of which intercultural artists need to be aware. In spite of enormous challenges, I believe that *Madmen and Specialists* is worth performing for a Canadian audience because the story is both repellent and compelling, and because it successfully condemns war, the people who wage it, and all of the destruction it produces. I cannot suggest how a director would more effectively address the challenges in the play, but I think that the play is worthy of careful, sensitive exploration. Understanding ideas about foreignness while confronting a foreign script may actually open the possibility for the audience to enter a third space where things are strange and unfamiliar, but where communication may be possible.

Chapter 2: *The Gods Are Not To Blame*, Africanisation and Translation

Intercultural theatre and the process of transferring one play to another culture is complex because there are so many variables involved. The "hourglass of cultures" helps to identify places where issues may be encountered, but it does not suggest how theatre practitioners should find solutions. Three filters, the "Theatrical Representation of Culture", "Reception Adapters" and "Readability," all encourage practitioners to consider ways to make foreignness accessible to an audience. *The Gods Are Not To* Blame (1968), by Ola Rotimi, is fascinating in terms of intercultural theatre because Rotimi is especially interested in Africanising theatre.[1] Paradoxically, to accomplish that goal, he adapted Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex,* a play in the Western literary canon. Rotimi uses the play to foreground contemporary African political issues while presenting them through Nigerian languages of proverbs, music and dance. Through content and form, the play is intentionally distanced from the Western play. On a Canadian stage, therefore, the performance may be clarified and made accessible to a non-Nigerian audience, or it can operate subversively, as culturally resistant to dominant Canadian theatre practice.

In this chapter I examine how Rotimi Africanises his play, and how those techniques function as sites of disruption and dislocation on a Canadian stage. Although I did not see AfriCan's 1999 production of the play, I recreate it in my imagination based on reviews and conversations with the director and the producer. In that way I act as audience member, as well as researcher and director.

Africanisation of the Content:

Rotimi's intention is to develop a truly African theatre for Africa.[2] He wanted to write "uninhibited and free" (Okafor 29) plays that would provide "what is desirable,

---

[1] According to Gebeyehu's research, Rotimi was absorbed by an "experiment to create a genuine Nigerian/African theatre both in form and content" (1).

[2] Ola Rotimi seems to have embraced the pan-African movement that was so popular on the continent during the early post-independence years. Pan-African thought suggests that there is one African culture which all people in Africa share. Although it seems clear that Rotimi's ideas about African theatre come from his personal experiences in Nigeria, he nonetheless spoke of them as if the theatre he developed would be inherently African in a continental sense. In one article he writes that he is comparing Brechtian "epic theatre and traditional African theatre" ("Much" 254). On the same page

unique and possible in African Theatre" (Okpi 107). The first task he set himself was to adapt the content of Sophocles' original script. Rotimi explained that he wrote the play because "Nigeria was in the throes of a civil war flamed by ethnic distrust, the bane of all Africa. A shattering tragedy like Oedipus' calamity should bring out the warning against this cancerous foible, I thought." (Banham, "Tribesman" 68).

The story is not an exact retelling of *Oedipus Rex*. In order to increase the relevance to contemporary Nigerian politics, Rotimi stresses the importance of finding new kinds of leaders for Nigeria by exposing Odewale's (Oedipus's) character flaws and comparing them to other characters in the play. Odewale shares many qualities with leaders from Nigeria's past which were considered virtues, such as courage, swift reactions, and violent fighting. But Rotimi uses Odewale to demonstrate that he no longer perceives these qualities as relevant or useful in the post-colonial age. Rotimi's adaptation also expands on the idea of the foreign king to tackle the contemporary and divisive issue of tribalism in Nigeria. Again, he does this by highlighting tribal tension between Odewale and the nation he rules, and adding the strong (and false) tribal allegiance to Odewale's list of character flaws that condemn him to his tragic end.

Very similar in plot to the Sophocles version of the play, the play focuses on Odewale (Oedipus), the ill-fated king of a small Nigerian kingdom. A foreigner, he became their king after he fought their battles and married Ojuola (Jocasta), the widowed queen. Soon, a terrible disease descends upon the land and Odewale swears that he will find out the cause of the disease. In his desperate search he learns about certain prophecies, about the baby Ojuola abandoned, and about the identity of the man he killed in his yam fields so many years ago. After wrongly exiling his wife's son, he learns that his own parents were actually foster parents, and that the man he

---

he writes "discussions of Brecht offerings to contemporary Nigerian theatre, has tended to ignore the generative resources of Nigerian (and African) archetypal theatre." Although he does not use "African" and "Nigerian" completely interchangeably, it is clear that for the purposes of a surveying article, he views them as the same, using examples from Nigerian theatre performances, and making generalizations about African theatre. According to Michael Etherton, in a 1970 article, the more exportable theatre becomes within Africa, the more it becomes like any other international theatre. But if it is traditional "it would seem to make more sense to consider theatre on the African continent in discrete ethnic categories...rather than to talk about it as a whole, as African theatre. *This, however, runs absolutely counter to cultural aspirations in Africa which still tend towards pan-Africanism as a rather generalized cultural ideology*" (Etherton 57, italics mine).

killed in the fields was his own father. That means that he has married his own mother. In her horror, Ojuola kills herself and Odewale carries through the punishment he had sworn to give to the cause of his nation's suffering by gouging out his own eyes. Then, he wanders out of the town into exile, holding hands with his doomed children.

In terms of Africanisation of the narrative, the most culturally jarring deviation from the Western version of the story is in its conclusion. In Sophocles' version of the story, Oedipus wanders blind and alone into the wilderness. Oedipus begs Creon for support in his children's future – at least the future of his daughters. "The boys at least... they're men, wherever they go, they'll find the means to live. But my two daughters, my poor helpless girls....take care of them I beg you" (247). Later he weeps that his girls will be shunned from family gatherings and that "Your doom is clear: you'll wither away to nothing, single, without a child" (248) because no man would marry a girl from a cursed family. Nevertheless, at the appointed moment when Oedipus is driven into exile, the children are wrenched from his hands and remain alive and protected, if cursed. Rotimi's adaptation presents a different ending. Odewale takes his innocent children with him, punishing them with him for his crimes. All holding hands, Odewale asks his son to guide them, making his child an agent of, or at least instrumental in, the children's own downfall as well.

ODEWALE. Adewale, you lead the way.

ADEBISI. To where, father?

ADEWALE. To where?

ODEWALE. Anywhere...wherever we get tired, there we rest to continue again. (72)

In Rotimi's efforts to Africanise the script, Odewale's children are not merely cursed, but doomed to share his fate. Unlike the Sophocles version of the story in which the tragedy is more individual, Rotimi focuses on the whole community in order to demonstrate the far-reaching effects of poor leadership. Not only are the children doomed as a result of their father's poor judgement, but Rotimi writes in the stage directions at the end that the townspeople "*kneel or crouch in final deference to the man whose tragedy is also their tragedy*" (72). Africanising the plot in this way means that the tragedy becomes communal rather than individual.

Ola Rotimi also explores local, contemporary concerns through the script. One issue that Rotimi is very concerned about is tribalism. Rotimi was born in 1938 in a semi-urban community known as Sapele, in Bendel State, Nigeria. His father was Yoruba and his mother was Ijo, and this multi-ethnic heritage flavours his theatre philosophy and his writing. In fact, in 1975 he told Nigerian critic Dapo Adelugba, "I am opposed to discrimination of any sort...race, creed, or ethnic. I take humanity as my tribesman"[3] (Banham, "Tribesman" 68). His adaptation of *Oedipus Rex* stresses his frustration with the divisive nature of tribalism within Nigeria and the way tribal allegiance encourages corruption and violence, paralysing the new Nigerian country.[4] Rotimi accentuates Odewale's tribalism by incorporating Sophocles' idea of the foreign king,[5] and by making the reason for killing his father, the catalyst for Odewale's doom, one of tribal rivalry and allegiance.[6] "The old man should not have mocked my tribe," growls Odewale after describing to his old friend Alaka what happened. "He called my tribe bush.[7] That I cannot bear" (50). Only after hearing this ultimate insult does Odewale actually attempt to kill the stranger, who is his natural father. Tribalism also affects Odewale's ability to conduct the search for the source of the nation's troubles. Odewale's paranoia about the chiefs possibly turning on him derives from the fact that Odewale is foreign and comes from another tribe. His concern is even emphasised by a proverb stating "The monkey and the gorilla may claim oneness but the monkey is monkey and the gorilla, gorilla" (51). In the final moments of the play tribalism receives further condemnation as Odewale himself is forced to recognise that tribal allegiance is one of his tragic flaws.

---

[3] Martin Banham was a professor at Leeds University in England and later taught at Ibadan University in Nigeria. He is a contemporary of Ola Rotimi and Wole Soyinka, and is very supportive of them. He published numerous articles and reviews of their work.

[4] Following independence, to many Nigerians it seemed that the tribe from which a politician hailed was more important than his politics. Tribalism was a major cause of the Biafran civil war (1967 – 70), but even before it broke out, tribal tension between northern Huasa-Fulani, the western Yoruba, and the eastern Igbo began almost immediately after independence as each group strived to achieve political supremacy" (Stovel 267).

[5] In Sophocles' version of *Oedipus Rex*, Oedipus believes he is a foreigner in a strange land, invited to act as king.

[6] In this case, tribalism is operating similarly to nationalism.

[7] "Bush" is an insult. Although I could not find it in any glossary, I imagine that it means that your tribe is "from the bush" and therefore "uncivilized."

Odewale admits that by banishing his brother/stepson, he has done him wrong, since Odewale himself was only acting on suspicions fuelled by tribalism.

ODEWALE. My brother, I have done you much wrong with my grave suspicions.

ADEROPO. It is nothing, your highness...It is the way the gods meant it to happen.

ODEWALE. No, no! Do not blame the Gods. Let no one blame the powers. My people, learn from my fall. Their powers would have failed if I did not let them use me. They knew my weakness; the weakness of a man easily moved to the defence of his tribe against others. I once slew a man on my farm in Ede. I could have spared him. But he spat on my tribe. He spat on the tribe I thought was my own tribe. The man laughed and laughing, he called me a 'man from the bush tribe of Ijekun'. And I lost my reason. Now I find out that that very man was my...own father, the King who ruled this land before me. It was my run from the blood I spilled to calm the hurt of my tribe that brought me to this land to do more horrors. (71)

In this didactic speech, Odewale begs his people to learn from his mistakes[8] and emphasises the ludicrous nature of his crime by saying "He spat on the tribe I thought was my own tribe," (71)[9] pointing out that we are all just people, and that tribalism, like any sort of allegiance, is not natural or inherently important; it is merely learned.

Ola Rotimi also Africanises the play thematically by using it to draw attention the search for good African leaders in the newly independent African nations. Tamrat Gebeyehu[10] writes that in *The Gods Are Not To Blame* "Rotimi was urgently searching for a hero. He examines virtuous political leaders whose downfall is in their vices....we know subjects share the destiny of their leaders" (52). Indeed, Rotimi was searching for a hero, but the man he puts on the throne is also interesting for another reason. Like Okonkwo in Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart,* Odewale is a successful fighter. Just as Okonkwo is the prize wrestler in his

---

[8] In the world of the Yoruba, unlike the world of *The Gods Are Not To Blame*, "you *can* change and choose your destiny," asserts Bayo Akinfemi. Critic Akanji Nasiru agrees that "the Yoruba world-view differs fundamentally from the Greek one... [for a Yoruba] the gods are benign beings who are willing to rescue man from his predicament provided he goes to them for guidance and follows their directives" (Nasiru 54). Nasiru argues that Yoruba people choose their own fate, and that Odewale's statement "Do not blame the gods" is impossible for Yoruba people because "we know they would not have failed" (55). Akinfemi told me that he did not feel that Ola Rotimi went far enough with the possibility of free will in his adaptation.

[9] While Odewale thought it was his own tribe, it was not the tribe of his birth.

[10] Tamrat Gebeyehu finished his MA thesis at the University of Alberta in 1993.

community, Odewale is prized for his fighting spirit and his great success in battle. However, Achebe and Rotimi both use their works to demonstrate that waging wars is only one aspect of ruling a country and a wide range of leadership skills are required for successful rule. In the modern age, when more is required of leaders than violence, Okonkwo hangs himself,[11] while his son Nwoye attends school and probably acquires skills more worthy of a leader in the now culturally hybrid Nigeria.[12] Always a man of action and violence, Odewale gouges out his own eyes, and takes all of his children with him into the wilderness where they will surely die together. Odewale tries to end his lineage which is cursed and has committed a sin against the gods, but ultimately Rotimi is also showing that Odewale's impaired moral judgement – refusing to listen to advisors, immediately swearing to violence against criminals as a solution to problems, leaping to defend his tribe, accusing people of crimes and banishing them speedily without proof – does not provide solutions at all. In spite of his good qualities, eventually these actions destroy him and Rotimi presents the idea that Nigeria needs new leaders with more measured responses to the problems facing the country.

In a later essay Rotimi writes that Nigeria's problems with leadership "started as an aberration" because it was the least expected source of problems for the new country ("Conditions" 127). To everyone's surprise, the new leaders abused their power and ignored all the hopes of the young, newly independent Nigeria. Rotimi writes that these leaders were "like some suffocating stench from the putrescent bowels of a collapsed public cesspit" ("Conditions" 127). Like the townspeople who never imagined that the gods were angry with their leader and sent plagues to punish him, Nigerians could hardly believe that their problems were caused by their leaders until it was really too late. Rotimi realised that it was not fate, the gods or bad luck that were causing Nigeria's problems, but people. He emphasises that realisation through his title *The Gods are Not to Blame.* Yet, as a young playwright, Rotimi was

---

[11] Okonkwo likes to solve problems through action, violence, and war. He kills himself when he realises his community will not choose war as a solution to their grievances, because he no longer fits in to such a community (Achebe 165).

[12] Nwoye goes to the Christian school to get away from his father's beatings and cruelty (Achebe 126). Nwoye is a good student and later goes to the training college for teachers (149). The fact that Nigeria is adopting some aspects of Christianity makes the country hybrid.

still optimistic about Nigeria's future and he still hoped that the leaders were not too obtuse and the people not too disillusioned to understand his crucial message ("Conditions" 130); he still believed his observations about tribalism and good leadership, explored in his play, could impact his audience and cause them to make changes in Nigeria.[13]

Rotimi's use of local African themes to modify the Western narrative is consistent with his desire to work with relevant and current issues. Rotimi explains that any writer "should have some commitment to his society. It is not enough to entertain, the writer must try to excite people into thinking or reacting to the situations he is striving to hold up to them in his drama or narrative" (Rotimi, "Interview" 66). By exploring tribalism and leadership, he found ways to make the content "African"; his next step was to make the style African.

Africanisation though Music, Dance, and Proverbs

Intending to communicate effectively to African people, for Ola Rotimi, the question was never whether to write in one of his native languages or to write in English. For him, the question was "*how* to reach a linguistically diverse audience" (Banham, "Tribesman" 75). Ola Rotimi explains that when he wrote the play he wanted to reach a broad audience within Nigeria, and as a result, he tried to create a new idiom: "a kind of language close to the rhythm and speech patterns of his native language but not deviating radically from standard English" (A. Johnson 137). To do that in *The Gods Are Not To Blame*, Rotimi incorporated two Nigerian communication techniques: the language of music and dance[14] and the language of proverbs. Both these techniques serve to Africanise the script in such a way that elements are so specifically localised within Nigeria that they necessarily seem

---

[13] Ola Rotimi believed in the power of his theatre, but not everyone believed that the tragic form encouraged positive change. J. Ndukaka Amankalor writes that Rotimi's two history plays *Kurunmi* (1971) and *Ovonvamwne Nogbaisi* (1974) "are fatalistic tragedies in the classical Greek mode and Rotimi has been criticised for adopting a tragic form that does not serve the needs of contemporary Nigerian society in any positive way" (Amankalor 152). Regardless of the audience response, his intent was clearly to spur people into action and to find hope.

[14] In Nigeria it is "unmusical" to separate music and dance. As Tony Adah, director of *Madmen and Specialists* explains in the previous chapter, the Nigerian proverb "It is hearing that makes the dance" indicates that the two are never separated in the Yoruba understanding.

foreign from a Western audience's perspective. By distancing the theatrical style from the West, Rotimi is able to give Nigerians ownership of the script.

Nigerian theatre critics argue that music and dance function very differently on a Nigerian stage than they usually do on a Western stage. "For many traditional African performers," writes critic Chinyere G. Okafor (28), "music and dance are not distractions but instead are essentially elements that can heighten the mood." Kalu Okpi explains that while some Western critics claim that the intervals slow down the development of the plot, for a Nigerian audience "they are not cosmetic" (Okpi 108). Critic Nasiru agrees that "such elements can easily degenerate into sheer theatricality if they are only employed for ornamental purposes, but Rotimi attempts to make them generate form and therefore reinforce the action of the play" (Nasiru 25). Catherine Obianuju Acholonu explains that since "dance permeates the daily life of Nigerian communities it should be understood that traditional Nigerian drama (that is drama that deals with traditional Nigerian settings and world views) should be structured to accommodate dance" (34). Acholonu goes on to explain many possible functions of dance. They include aiding in characterization, presenting setting or plot, developing and resolving conflict, and enhancing themes. Acholonu says "Whether it is death, war, sacrifice or reunion, this can best be established through a fitting dance drawn from the cultural location from which the drama originates" (37). She adds, "certain dance movements and costumes and musical tunes are associated with specific cultural settings in Nigeria. These can easily be woven into drama to propagate themes of cultural alienation or cultural synthesis" (38). The general agreement among scholars is that music and dance deepen the audience's appreciation for all aspects of the play, providing they understand the language of music and dance.

Music, dance and ritual foreground the entire play. In the opening stage directions of the prologue to *The Gods Are Not To Blame*, Rotimi writes:

Background choral singing, drumming and symbolic sound-effects come up now and again to stress climactic moments...Rhythmic clinking of metallic objects can be heard in the background, building up, then fading to a sustained softness: the rhythm of Ogun, the Yoruba God of Iron and of War (1).[15]

[15] The god Ogun is discussed extensively in the previous chapter.

This opening is followed by a procession to bring in Odewale and Ojuola. The procession is accompanied by dancing. A chorus sings a dirge for the dead and later, a royal bard sings praise songs for the royal family. Rotimi even specifies that a particular drum rhythm is to be used at one point.

Music continues beyond the prologue. During the course of the play, some songs are sung in Nigerian languages. Examples include the townspeople's and towncrier's call to fight sickness (17) and Odewale's home song (44). Others, which are not necessarily sung but may be, are in English, including greetings to the seer Baba Fakunle (25), the Royal Bard's greetings to Odewale and Ojuola (36 – 38), the old friend Alaka's greetings to Odewale (43), the charms in the magic battle between Odewale and his natural father (47 – 49), and Odewale's final speech before exile (72). Music is so pervasive within the world of the play that Rotimi even writes a moment for Ojuola to teach her children a song (38).

Rotimi uses music and dance as one specifically African method of communication in *The Gods Are Not To Blame;* another method is the extensive use of proverbs. The play is seasoned with proverbs throughout since "Nigerians love proverbs" (Okpi 109). The art of using proverbs in West African countries such as Ghana and Nigeria is an important rhetorical skill, passed down from generation to generation.[16] So important is the skill that according to Wisdom Agorde,[17] it is possible for elderly people to speak entirely in proverbs to such an extent that younger children or less educated people cannot understand the conversation. The use of proverbs demonstrates wisdom, power, and good sense, thus their extensive use in the play elevates the language of the script for a Nigerian audience in a way that might be analogous to the use of iambic pentameter or archaic English for a Western audience. Okpi insists that "proverbs make language clear and effective" and that they "add local flavour to either a speech or a piece of writing" (109). The use of proverbs is clearly an extension of Rotimi's goal to Africanise Nigerian theatre.

---

[16] Okafor mentions that Ola Rotimi's father was a professional orator, (24) so if he wished to, he would have had ample opportunity to learn proverbs while growing up.

[17] Wisdom Agorde is a graduate student from Ghana, who received his MA in Drama from the University of Alberta in 2002.

Transferring *The Gods Are Not To Blame* to the Canadian Stage:

Ola Rotimi's goal to Africanise a play from the Western canon creates tension when that play is performed on a Canadian stage because Africanisation challenges Canadian expectations and assumptions about African theatre. Rotimi's efforts also focus on communicating specifically with Nigerians, and as a result, the script does not necessarily speak to Canadians. For the Canadian audience there is tension created between a somewhat familiar narrative and the unfamiliar languages of music, dance and proverbs.[18] Additionally, Rotimi's Africanising plot deviations have the potential either to open up intercultural communication, or in fact, to block it. The process of translation can occur in several ways. The languages of music, dance, and proverbs can potentially offer up cultural resistance on the Canadian stage to mainstream Canadian theatre, and in so doing, assert the importance of a minority or marginalised culture, possibly at the expense of broader, intercultural communication. But if the languages do not present cultural resistance after all, then they may create new, unexpected, but potentially valid intercultural meanings for their audiences.

Modupe Olaogun, who produced *The Gods Are Not To Blame* at the Toronto ArtWord Theatre (June 16 – 20, 1999) explains:

> The play combines the universal and the particular in a very interesting way. The universal theme, originally Greek, translates very well into an African context. Now we have reintroduced it into a Western context, with something new added. Every time this happens we have a chance to see how the universality is played out again (ArtWord 2).

While Olaogun hoped to stress the universality in their production, the director Bayo Akinfemi focussed on "authenticity."[19] Akinfemi was very comfortable in the world of the play because the play took place in his home country and he had only been in Canada two years when he directed it. He understood the dance, music, proverbs, and social customs present in the script but was conscious that he was presenting

[18] Many Canadians are familiar with music and dance as methods of communication in performance and the music and dance may communicate to them. However, most non-Nigerian Canadians are not familiar with the specific gestures and rhythms of Nigerian music and dance or the meanings associated with them.

[19] Salman Rushdie argues that "'authenticity' is the respectable child of old-fashioned exoticism. It demands that sources, forms, style, language, and symbol all derive from a supposedly homogeneous and unbroken tradition" (67).

something that was culturally different to the audience in Canada. When I talked with him, he indicated that he was very interested in the challenges of directing a play from his own culture to a different culture. Akinfemi wanted to "present something this part of the world had never seen before."[20] He was eager to direct *The Gods Are Not To Blame* for three reasons: first, "it is a very rich play;" second, "I understand the culture and I can identify with it"; and third, it was an interesting challenge to do the play in a different culture because it would be "a different ballgame in Nigeria with Nigerian actors."[21] To ensure authenticity, he recruited Nigerian drummers to play music live on the stage, and he invited a woman to choreograph the dancing and to lead the singing. Akinfemi ensured that actors wore real Nigerian costumes, that the play set evoked the idea of a Nigerian palace as much as possible, and that the throne was raised in such a way that the hierarchy of the court could be easily visible. Akinfemi chose to highlight the particular, specifically Africanised elements of the script, and allowed the other culturally challenging elements to take care of themselves. As a result, he lost the opportunity to intentionally deal with music and dance or proverbs as language systems.

In Rotimi's adaptation, music and dance, together, attains the status of a language[22] because of its capacity to convey meaning to the audience in a systematic way. Drumbeats performed in the play, for example, must have recognisable and specific meanings, because after Aderopo is exiled the stage directions suggest "*A lonely flute plays softly in the background contrasting with* incoherent *phrases of drumbeats*" (36, emphasis mine).[23] Obviously if these drumbeats are incoherent, then previous ones must be "coherent" or possible to understand. This language is all

---

[20] All the director's comments are from a telephone interview, May 8, 2002, unless otherwise indicated.

[21] Of Akinfemi's cast of 29, 70% of the actors did not have a Nigerian background. They hailed from countries such as Canada, the United States, Jamaica, Zaire, and South Africa

[22] I use the singular here of "language" because the literature indicates that music, poetry, and dance are inseparable in Nigeria. Music and dance are taught simultaneously, and as I quoted in the first chapter, Wole Soyinka explains that "it is 'unmusical' to separate Yoruba musical form from myth and poetry" ("Fourth" 25). There is even a Nigerian proverb that says "It is hearing that makes the dance" (Adah).

[23] The idea of drum beats as a language in Nigeria is more specifically dealt with in Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*. In that play the English officer Pilkings and his wife ask their servant what the drumming is about. Eventually he replies "Madam, this is what I am trying to say: I am not sure. It sounds like the death of a great chief and then, it sounds like the wedding of a great chief. It really mix me up" (170).

alien and perhaps incoherent to a Western audience member, and is made all the more foreign and obscure if the songs are sung in Nigerian languages unfamiliar to a Canadian audience, as they occasionally are in this play.[24] The language of music and dance in Rotimi's adaptation can be analysed using the tools provided by Julie Byczynski in her article "A word in a foreign language: On *Not* Translating in the Theatre" (2000). Bycznyski explains that using foreign dialogue can subvert the authority of the dominant language of the stage "by establishing an unmistakable presence of minority language and culture" (33). She suggests a number of potential audience responses: first, frustration at not being able to understand; second, bewilderment at not being able to follow the action; or third, alienation because the audience may feel excluded (33). The language of music and dance in *The Gods Are Not To Blame* may lead to the last of these three responses for a Canadian audience, but probably not the first two. Neither frustration nor bewilderment is likely because Rotimi's song and dance do not replace action; they accent it. For example, in the early part of the play, Odewale demands that his people take some responsibility for the sickness in their community.

ODWALE. Up, all of you – into the bush! Go and get cutlasses – go on! Go and pick herbs from the bush, boil them, drink them. Get up, go on – in twos, threes, get up!

WOMAN. Women too?

ODEWALE. Women stay at home and look after the children, make the fire, get boiling pots ready. Men, you all go! Abero! Ab-

ABERO. Here I am, my lord.

ODEWALE. Bring me those herbs I cut from the bush last night. Everybody, come and see…I, with my own two hands, and alone in the bush…[*Taking the leaves from Abero who has just entered with them*]. These…see? My wife, Ojuola herself has boiled part of them for the household. This evening again, I head for the bush for more.

---

[24] Examples of songs in languages other than English include the song of the Towncrier and the song of the Townsmen sung just after Odewale says "Come brothers let us hear the word that my wife's son has brought from the oracle" (16); the song Ojuola teaches to her children just after Odewale banishes her son (36); and Odewale's nostalgic home song he sings after the arrival of his old friend Alaka (44).

TOWNSPEOPLE. [*inspired, beginning to disperse*]. We shall go!

Long may your highness live!

We thank you, our lord!

May your reign be blessed!

Long may the crown rest on your head!

And the royal shoes on your feet! (17)

Following that dialogue there is a brief interchange in which Odewale deals with a woman who has gone mad because her husband died of the illness. Then the Towncrier appears singing:

O ya	Come round everybody
E je k'alo	Let us all go, into the bush
E m'ada l'owo, e gbe koko	Get your cutlasses get cooking pots
Igbo ya, igbo ya.	get ready for work.
Ewe gbogbo l'ogun	All herbs are medicines
Ogun gbogbo l'ewe	all medicines herbs
O ya	so, come round everybody
E je k'alo	let us all go
E m'ada l'owo, e gbe koko	into the bush
Igbo ya, igbo ya.	Landlord get up,
	Guests join in too.
At'onile, at'alajo	Everyone, young and old
At'omodo o'at'agba	into the bush.
Igboya, igbo ya.	(17)

After this song the townsmen begin a similar one. Even if the songs were not translated into English, a non-Nigerian audience member would not have trouble following the story because these elements do not forward the plot independently of the dialogue in English. As Byczynski explains, "the extent to which the audience actually needs to know precisely what is said in the "foreign" language varies

according to how the minority language is worked into the script, and this necessarily affects resistance" (34). Even though music and dance may assert Nigerian culture on stage, they would not be likely to confuse an audience unfamiliar with them. In fact, even the third response in the audience, that of feeling excluded because they do not fully understand or because they do not recognise the signs being used to convey meaning, is only likely if audience members feel like they are missing the full meaning of the music and dancing. However, they may not recognise that they are missing anything, or that they do not really understand, thus they may not feel confronted or excluded in any way. Instead, they may simply see the exotification[25] of African culture through the performance of *The Gods Are Not To Blame*, without appreciating the true significance.

Audience alienation from the performance as a result of a lack of understanding of the idiom of music and dance could be as severe as audience alienation resulting from the presence of foreign language dialogue. It could be even more subversive because the audience members may not realise or recognise their own exclusion from aspects of the performance. For example, when Aderopo is exiled for conspiracy against Odewale, the decision is not unanimously supported by the community. Odewale panics and shouts "You are all taking sides, are you?" (35). Yet in the next scene, the Royal Bard enters with drummers and King Odewale. The Royal Bard sings, first for the King and then for the Queen, along with dancing. His song begins:

ROYAL BARD. There are kings, and there are kings
if you mean to hurt our king
you will fail:
the lion's liver is vain wish
for dogs. (36, 37)

Stage directions indicate that Odewale "*pastes some cowries on the forehead of the Bard and drummers*" (37). Cowries acted as money in Nigeria. Therefore Odewale was paying the musicians for their kind words to him and the audience is informed that the praise singers cannot necessarily be trusted to speak the truth, and that they do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the rest of the community. A praise singer

[25] Bycniczki calls the act of exotification "reinscribing otherness" (35).

is a common position in Nigerian courts, so although he sings praises, he is paid to do so; his happiness does not need to reflect the attitude of the people in the kingdom. A Canadian may hear the singing but may not recognise the deeper meaning that Rotimi intended.

There is a fourth possible audience response to the "foreign language" of music and dance to which Byczinski does not refer. Perhaps the audience would not feel frustrated, bewildered, or excluded. Instead, the unfamiliar communication may alert audience members to be sensitive to a world to which they do not have access. They may both acknowledge and accept that they do not understand, and may not feel the need to penetrate further. For Rotimi, the presence of music and dance are an important element in creating a truly African theatre; their presence takes on a different significance within a foreign environment because of the performers' ability or inability to communicate clearly to a non-Nigerian audience by using those tools.

Proverbs can also operate as a foreign language on the Canadian stage. While Okpi asserts that proverbs "make language clear and effective," (109) in fact they can be confusing to an untrained listener. Director Bayo Akinfemi concurs that proverbs became important for the actors during the rehearsal process because "A lot of people didn't understand the context, the proverbs, the language or the way it was used." As Bycnizki suggests, proverbs can alienate people from the production because they do not fully understand what is being said.

Some of the proverbs in *The Gods Are Not To Blame* are easy for the untutored to understand. For example, in the prologue, Odewale says "He who pelts another with pebbles asks for rocks in return" (7) which clearly indicates that if a person provokes someone, he should expect him to fight back and even to escalate the conflict. Slightly more challenging than the previous example, when Odewale tells his step-son that he wants the young man to share the oracle's news in front of the community rather than in private they argue in proverbs.

ODEWALE. Details, son, give us the details.

ADEROPO. I'd rather tell you those in private, my lord.

ODEWALE. Private! What is private about a whole kingdom in pain?

FIRST CHIEF. Speak openly, son.

ADEROPO. It is said that the secrets of a home should be known first to the head of the home.

ODEWALE. I refuse to listen alone. Speak openly, son, before all – a cooking-pot for the chameleon is a cooking-pot of the lizard! (19)

We can imagine that Odewale is saying that we may not all be identical but we are of the same family, equally vulnerable to being "cooked" by disaster, and equally deserving of the same treatment. The above two examples may be unfamiliar, but I found them fairly straightforward to interpret.

However, not all the proverbs are so easy for an untutored audience to understand; I found that many are very confusing or even misleading. Lines like the Royal Bard's declaration in his praise song to Odewale that "it is not changing into the lion that is hard, it is getting the tail of a lion" (7) are less obvious to a Canadian. Okpi explains that it is praise for the man the community made King (9), but I found that answer unsatisfactory. I asked for an explanation from Joseph Iyekekepor, professor of French at the University of Alberta, and originally from Nigeria. At first he said, "It is like when a person tells a joke, but that person isn't really funny." He explained that the proverb suggests that it may be easy to pretend to be something, but you may lack the essence of the thing. If a tail is part of the essence of a lion, you can pretend to be a lion all you want, but without the tail, you are not a lion. The line is a statement of praise because Odewale has proved he is a lion. Presenting further challenges, when I first heard the chief's question when the people are petitioning their king for help "when rain falls on the leopard does it wash away it spots" (9), I imagined it means that a person's true identity cannot be removed. However, Okpi says that the chief "is asking the King whether the privileges and good things of kingship have made him negligent of his duties to his people" (110).

The language of proverbs can be truly baffling, easy for an untrained listener to misinterpret or confuse. Yet the proverbs, which often replace more conventional dialogue in the text, enrich and colour the script in a fascinating way. Because a Canadian is probably familiar with the story of *Oedipus Rex,* proverbs will not likely disrupt the core narrative. Even though subtle meaning may be lost, the use of proverbs does not completely exclude an uninformed Canadian as much as it could,

because they do not carry the full story. However, the use of proverbs does assert the presence of marginal Nigerian culture on the Canadian stage.[26]

It could be argued that music, dance, and proverbs in the play begin to help create new meanings, or even multiple meanings. Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of hetereoglossia, or multivoicedness, suggests that many voices are operating within certain texts, and they may be read in a variety of ways. Within *The Gods Are Not To Blame* are the voices of Sophocles, Rotimi, the youth of Nigeria during the Civil War, Yoruba tradition and many others. Each of these voices may dominate under certain performance conditions or in certain contexts. Bakhtin believes that what allows for clear communication is "extraverbal context" (Volosinov 99) or an agreed-upon understanding of the space in which events, "common knowledge and understanding of the situation," and "common evaluation of the situation" (99) take place. But of course, a Canadian viewer may not understand the location of the music, dance, and proverbs as well as a Nigerian. The idea of multivoicedness means that the words, phrases, dances, and gestures are infused with meaning within the collective Nigerian memory. Each time a song is sung or a proverb is told, it carries the echoes in the minds of the listeners and viewers of all times they have previously heard that song or proverb. In a sense, it resonates with Nigerian culture and with the voices of that location. For example, when Odewale sings the "home song," a song about homesickness and love for community, it would resonate on many levels with Nigerians in the audience. In the script, after Odewale's old friend from home, Alaka, arrives, Rotimi writes

> ODEWALE. (*nostalgically sings a 'home' song while ALAKA dances.*)
> Ekun ku o
> Mbo mbo
> M'ele way a
> Mbo mbo

---

[26] Similar to the poetic language of proverbs but somewhat different is "euphemism" which Okpi says is another common feature of Nigerian language, that is used by Rotimi to create an African background for the play. Okpi points to several examples about death, such as "he has passed to the land of the silent ones" or "The man became heavy with years and so he let the earth receive his body" (58) to illustrate the way Rotimi's characters gently state unpleasant subjects.

Ekun ku o
Mbo mbo
M'ele way a
Mbo mbo
Ere we tinkpojiba
Kpobere kako
Hmm...hmm...hmm...
Alaka, son of Odediran! Come enter my house.
Enter...my house is your house. (44)

In Nigeria, the song may be familiar, but in Canada, the sounds are fresh, and although they may carry resonances of homesickness for Nigerians, for non-Nigerians, there is no extraverbal context, and therefore, no common resonance. Since there is no meaning already infused in the song for the non-Nigerian listener, the presentation offers opportunities for new meaning to be created. No matter how authentic Akinfemi tries to make the performance, the ideas may be received differently in Canada, and no matter how universal Olaogun feels the script is, the text will be experienced differently in translation. Michael Holquist argues "Heteroglossia is a plurality of relations, not just a cacophony of different voices" (89). The many voices within the text will communicate something, but the intentions may not be realised. Held and McGrew write that globalization sceptics suggest "foreign cultural products are constantly read and interpreted in novel ways by national audiences," and Trinh T. Minh-ha writes "the original is bound to undergo a change in its afterlife [as a translated document]" (18). The idea of heteroglossia leaves potential, not just for one new meaning, but for multiple meanings to be communicated at any given time. This script, like many others, remains open-ended, with the possibility for many voices to be heard and many voices to interrelate.

Furthermore, we cannot imagine that Nigeria has remained static since 1968, and the Nigeria of 1968 may require a different understanding than the world of today. As Bakhtin argues, the "extraverbal context" of any utterance is necessary for full understanding, but the context that created *The Gods Are Not To Blame* has changed

significantly since the play was written. Rotimi explains that in the 1960s when he wrote the play, he was like many of the other optimistic and hopeful youth of Nigeria. "I belong to a peculiar generation," he explains ("Conditions" 126), "specifically, that crop of young men and women whose cultivation for national service matured at the point of the nation's break from colonial rule." He adds that these young people were educated in a Euro-Western way, were animated by nationalism, and had "hearts inflamed by hope." Although his play is a tragedy, I believe that in order to contextualise it, we must also locate the play within this context of youth, hope, and a desire to effect change. Rotimi's script warns against the problems of tribalism and rash leadership, but does not intend to suggest that the future of Nigeria has to be bleak. The movement away from geographic space and a specific time period means that, as Trinh T. Minh-ha points out, the source keeps shifting as translation occurs (18). Even as we accept the "extraverbal context" of hope surrounding *The Gods Are Not To Blame,* it is important that we also acknowledge that circumstances have changed in Nigeria, and that Canadians' understanding of Nigeria are also changing.[27]

Conclusions:

A play like *The Gods Are Not To Blame* is exciting to consider in terms of cross-cultural translation, because of the two systems of music and dance and of proverbs that operate like distinct languages. Akinfemi's decision to present the play in as "authentic" a way as possible reinforces Rotimi's efforts to Africanise the play, but in so doing, creates potential barriers to intentional communication. Either cultural resistance may obstruct clear communication, or the heteroglossia of the text may create so many new meanings, that the play becomes a very different performance in Canada than it would be in Nigeria, in spite of (or perhaps because of) goals to be "authentic." "Authenticity" only serves to locate the piece, but cannot make any

[27] Violence continues to be a problem in Nigeria. While I was writing this, a Nigerian woman was sentenced to death by stoning because she had a child out of wedlock. The case received a lot of publicity in Canada.

comments about meaning, significance, or ideas, which Rotimi wants his Africanisation to foreground.

The script is interesting because so much of the text's heteroglossia is possible to trace. The Western voices of the original narrative are intermingled with the voices Rotimi added in his Africanising adaptation process. In Akinfemi's production, unfortunately the focus on "authenticity" cloaks the Nigerian voices in easily understood artifacts of cultural identity such as costumes and hair pieces. Because these aspects of culture are easy for a Canadian audience to absorb as cultural indicators, they can drown out the more thematically significant Nigerian voices present in the play. A Canadian audience may only hear the voices with which they are already familiar when they are listening for thematic significance, because they have a more substantial extraverbal context for that expression. However, if the Nigerian voices of the heteroglossia are given a full opportunity to speak within the context of an intercultural performance, they have the potential to be heard, to open up space for intercultural communication, or to create sites of intentional cultural resistance. The script's potential to create a relationship of dialogues remains open-ended.

Chapter 3: *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* and Brechtian Performance Techniques

The "hourglass" can be used as a tool for transferring theatre from one culture to another, but the specific techniques required to address the issues the "hourglass" illuminates are different depending on the nature of the script and the director's intentions for the play. In this chapter, I focus on issues the "hourglass" raises about actors, theatrical form and reception adapters. As a case study, I use Zakes Mda's *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses,* and the AfriCan Theatre Ensemble production of this play at the ArtWord Theatre in Toronto (October 4 – 21, 2001) and I consider the merits of theatre-for-development and Brechtian performance methods as ways of developing effective responses to the challenges highlighted by the "hourglass."

The story takes place in 1980s Lesotho, a tiny country entirely surrounded by South Africa, but not a part of it. The story is about a prostitute, known simply as Lady, and a flat cleaner, called Woman, who are standing together in a line, waiting to buy cheap rice. As the women wait, the audience learns about the women's problems and the courage they need to face each day. They discuss the patriarchal and racist system that has kept them poor, and they also talk about their fantasies for a better life, and about the very few choices open to them.

The play is valuable because the issues it explores, such as gender inequality, racial discrimination, and the culture of beauty are relevant to Canadians, as are the themes of apathy and conscientisation.[1] Secondly, in terms of intercultural theatre, it is worth studying because the specificities of the situation and the style of theatre are foreign to Canadians. The fact that the play takes place during the apartheid era in another hemisphere does not mean that the narrative is either stale or inaccessible, but actually means that the confrontation with a different world demonstrates an alien

[1] Zakes Mda uses the word "conscientisation" in his writings about theatre-for-development. He explains that conscientisation is the critical awareness that can result from using theatre as a vehicle for critical analysis. "Participants may," he writes, "through theatre, create their own messages on the issues that concern them, and possibly work out their own solutions" ("Politics" 208). Focussing on marginalized communities such as Southern Africa's rural poor and urban slums, the intention is to raise critical awareness "so that [the disadvantaged people in society] will be able to identify their problems as consequences of a particular social order" (*People* 10). Mda acknowledges that theatre with conscientisation as a goal is based in the philosophy of Paolo Freire and the work of adult educators such as Augusto Boal, Ross Kidd, and Martin Byram, and theatre practitioners and scholars such as Christopher Kamlongera, Stephen Chifunyise and David Kerr (*People* 10).

culture, creates a venue for intercultural communication, and opens up all the possibilities for gaps, fissures, and tentative connections between Canadians and the Southern Africans.

The play's style in particular, rooted in theatre-for-development experiences and Brechtian performance techniques, has the potential to be jarring to a Canadian audience, and can be exploited to foster the transfer of theatre from one culture to another. With careful, sensitive direction, *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* can be used as a vehicle to foreground issues Canadians could profitably consider, and at the same time, it can present a foreign narrative and narrative style that can shake an audience into responding to the issues the play presents. In order to set up a discussion between the text and its performance for both its African and Canadian audiences, I begin by explaining what background sources and experiences Mda brought to the creation of the play, and by elaborating on the interculturality of the themes. Next I examine Rhoma Spencer's directorial choices, and finally consider ways of using Brecht's techniques that could create an even more effective production. I chose to include *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* in my thesis because I was particularly struck by the ideas the play considers, and because I felt that the production offered the chance to make some interesting observations concerning both its merits and its missed potential.

Roots of the Script: Source Culture

In order to fully understand the issues in the play, and to choose the best way to present those issues in Canada, the director must carefully locate the script in time and space. Acknowledging that time and space necessarily change the way audiences approach and hear the work does not mean that original intentions or material conditions should be overshadowed in current readings of the script. Rather, current readings must be able to reflect back on the original intentions and material conditions so that they can more effectively communicate in the present. While studying *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses,* I began to imagine a performance text that would do the most justice to the issues considered in the play and would best facilitate the intercultural transfer of those themes to Canada.

Zakes Mda may be relatively unknown as a playwright in North America (Ruder 160) but he has been internationally recognised for his plays and novel.[2] Working within the artistically hybrid context of Southern Africa while living outside of his home country, and using theatre as a tool to conscientise poor people resulted in his creating an interesting style full of socially relevant themes. Understanding his background will provide insight into why his play *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* could be challenging, but worth performing in Canada. Zakes Mda wrote and developed *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* in 1988 while in exile in the United States, and while working with the theatre-for-development group, "Theatre of Marotholi," in Lesotho. Born in 1948 to Xhosa parents in the Eastern Cape, he and his family fled South Africa when he was sixteen years old because of his father's risky revolutionary activities with the Youth League of the African National Congress. Before returning to South Africa in 1995, Mda lived in Lesotho, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Besides working as a writer and professor, he spent several years researching and practicing theatre-for-development and theatre as development communication.

Lesotho's recent history is closely tied to, but separate from, South Africa's and it is important to understand how the two interrelate in order to appreciate why the women in Mda's play make some of the choices they do. David Graver, the editor of a 1999 collection of South African plays, suggests that the advantage of locating *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* in Lesotho is that "issues of poverty, corruption, dependency, and self-assertion are not over-written with the social and psychological dynamics of racial bigotry and discrimination," (8) in the way those issues are in South Africa. However, South Africa's politics did have a strong influence on conditions in Lesotho. Although Lesotho did not share South Africa's laws, the country was dependent on South Africa for trade goods (as a part of the Southern

[2] Mda has a large corpus of work including plays, non-fiction, and novels. His early plays include: *We Shall Sing for the Fatherland*, winner of the South African Amstel Merit Award in 1978; *The Hill*, winner of the Amstel Playwright of the Year Award in 1983; and *The Road*, winner of the American Theater Association Christina Crawford Award in 1984. He also received the 2001 Commonwealth Prize for Literature.

African Customs Union),[3] and many citizens went to South Africa for work.[4] Dependency on South Africa meant South Africa's policies deeply affected citizens of Lesotho. After Lesotho's Prime Minister, Chief Jonathan, joined other nations in criticizing South African apartheid, South Africa closed Lesotho's borders, strangling the country.

Three year later, after a successful coup against Chief Jonathan, Lesotho's new regime no longer spoke out against apartheid and was more amenable to South African policies (Lundahl and Petersson 48 – 52). South Africa denied any involvement in the coup.[5] Meanwhile, many citizens of Lesotho went to South Africa to find work. Conditions were difficult in Lesotho during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Sixty percent of the population lived below the poverty line, 60% of rural households were managed by women, and about 48% of the population received food aid from international donors (Mda *People* 54). Men left to work in the mines while women usually provided domestic labour. People had only to travel six hours, and suddenly they crossed a border into a country where segregation laws and other apartheid regulations were enforced.

Mda's position on whether or not Lesotho has a separate social, economic, and political condition from South Africa is made clear through dialogue between Lady and Woman:

LADY. They are not our politics. They are the politics of another country.

WOMAN. I work there so everything that happens there affects me. It affects you too, although you're like most others, decided to wear blinkers and pretend that you live in a never-never land that will smoothly map out its destiny irrespective of all the turbulence surrounding it. One day it's going to dawn on you, and on the rest of all the others who think like you, that this struggle is not just South African. It is Southern African. (26)

---

[3] In 1984, 100% of Lesotho's electrical power and 97% of their other imports came from South Africa. (Swatuk 56).

[4] Larry Swatuk argues that in 1988 Lesotho citizens were "virtual hostages of South African military and economic power" (32) while Timothy Shaw writes "Historically, Lesotho was the bread-basket of southern Africa; now it is a labour-exporting basket case" (3). About one third of working age adults were working in South Africa in the 1980s (Swatuk 42).

[5] Swatuk argues that South Africa at least supported the coup efforts (32).

As far as the world of the play is concerned, what happens in South Africa is significant to everyone in the region. Even though the world of the play is happening near the end of the apartheid era, change is still slow in coming. Nelson Mandela was not released until 1990 and the first South African elections were not until 1994. Despite the major international criticism aimed at South Africa in the late 1980s for its segregation policies, every aspect of life was steeped in apartheid regulations, and that meant Lesotho was affected as well. In 1988 Lesotho did not have apartheid policies, but South Africa's apartheid regime, and the impact it had on trade and the possibilities for social change affected the citizens of the tiny country on a daily basis. When locating *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses*, it is important not to make too much of the fact that the play is in Lesotho rather than in South Africa, although acknowledging the social and political differences may help clarify some of the references to Lesotho, and may help to emphasise the idea that people are effected by the decisions of other people and of governments outside of their immediate environment.

Referring to Zakes Mda's exile from South Africa during 35 years of anti-apartheid struggle, Sandra Martin of the Globe and Mail argues "that distance has given his writing, much of it done in exile, a longer and more intellectual perspective on the evils of institutionalized racism....Mda's ability to see the reality of South Africa's deeply entrenched sexism must be a byproduct of growing up in exile" (Martin Dec 4). I would argue that the ideas in the play go further in that they also relate closely to his theatre-for-development work. His philosophy of drama and theatre-for development gelled when he was working in Lesotho from 1985 to 1990 with the Marotholi Travelling Theatre. In his book, *When People Play People*, he explains how theatre-for-development works and does not work in various circumstances. The key elements, he explains, are community participation at every level of creating the performance, and using the performance to suggest, discuss, and develop solutions to a local problem. Mda believes that theatre-for-development fosters self-reliance, encourages villagers to question contradictions in society, develops a forum for community discussion of issues, provides opportunities to discuss problems and implement solutions, and revitalises local forms of cultural

expression (*People* 178, 179). Some play topics included rural sanitation (1986), trade unions (1988), and alcoholism (1989) (Mda, *People*). In his analysis of the successful *Trade Union Play* (146), he describes how community members chose to address the topic. When the day of the play creation came, community members began to ululate and join the actors in the playing area, even before they had been invited to do so, thus incorporating local performance styles into the play production. Sharing these experiences with Lesotho villagers, and especially Lesotho women[6] contributed to his understanding of issues facing poor women.

Zakes Mda's work with women in his theatre-for-development projects probably sensitised him to Southern African women's issues that many writers ignored. Mda believes that in the 1980s most people focused on liberation from race laws, at the expense of other significant issues such as class, poverty, and gender issues. "[Women] were oppressed by the apartheid system, but they were also oppressed by the culture itself, and by us – the men" explains Mda (Martin). Miki Flockemann agrees that in South Africa, "domestic and social spheres have generally been subsumed in an overriding discourse of political opposition to racial inequality" (218). When people did make protest efforts regarding women's issues such as maternity rights or childcare facilities in South Africa, they were not seen as protests against the patriarchal system, Flockemann explains, because those protesters tend to dissociate themselves from feminism as a label. Yet, argues Flockemann, "it is not so much the feminist practice that they have problems with, but the right to 'name' local women's struggles; they are resisting what they see as a totalizing discourse that does not do justice to the particular social stratification of South African women" (Flockemann 219). This "particular social stratification" of women in Southern Africa combines the many layers of racial, cultural, and class lines, a vision that was rarely shown in apartheid theatre (Flockemann 219). Mda told Sandra Martin that the general consensus was that people did not need to worry about women's issues or class because they believed that after apartheid was over, "things would fall into

[6] For nearly all of the plays he worked on, 90% of the participants were women, possibly because their time was more flexible or because they worked more closely to the area where the plays were created. The only exception was the trade union play in which men made up a slight majority. Theatre practitioners actively recruited men for that play because the issue specifically affected them (Mda, *People*).

place, and we would all be free" (Martin). Time has shown that even though South Africa is healing, equality is still a distant dream for many Southern Africans, and in particular, as Zakes Mda says, "equality for Southern African women remains a utopia" (Martin).

Even though *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* is not community generated or audience participatory, much of the dialogue structure resonates with Mda's theatre-for-development work, and could have come out of conversations he had while working with Maratholi Theatre. For example, the opening of "Kopano ke Matla!", in which women are discussing the increasing cost of living, is very similarly structured to the dialogue in *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* when the women discuss the problem of waiting in line and being usurped by rich companies with big trucks. In "Kopan ke Matla!" the women first identify the problem. "It is because of this big monster called sales tax" (Mda, *People*191). Second, they examine complications. The stage directions read, "*the women then discuss the fact that a neighbouring village has established a co-operative society. One woman objects to co-ops because of the corruption they generate; another on party political grounds*" (Mda, *People*191). Finally, the women suggest an interim solution: they will start a cooperative. Although the content is different in *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses,* when the women are faced with social issues, the dialogue is created in the same way. First, Woman identifies the problem:

WOMAN. Look, they are loading it into the trucks!...It's not fair! We have been waiting here for days, and those trucks just drive in and get loaded with rice.... Wholesalers, general dealers and jobbers. They're buying this rice here because it's cheap. They're going to sell it in their shops. At a very high price. (14)

Second, they examine some complications about the issue, such as how Woman's behaviour will alienate the bureaucrats, and how the women are not actually required to be in line, waiting for the rice. They also discuss the dilemma that the food is intended to be food aid for the poorest of the poor, and not only is it being sold, but these women are not actually the donors' concept of poorest of the poor target recipients:

WOMAN. [shouting at the trucks] Fuck you all, big-bellied businessmen. That is our rice!

LADY. Shut up, for God's sake. You are going to make things worse for us. They are going to keep us waiting here for the next ten days just for that.

WOMAN. Listen, we have rights as well as any person here. We have been waiting for days. And these big men with big trucks just push in and load the rice.

LADY. Nobody forced you to come here, you know that. Nobody said, "Sister woman, you are forced to go and buy rice from the government food aid depots. Go or face the firing squad!"

WOMAN. If it's food aid it must be given to the poor for free. And in many cases it helps to keep them where they are – poor.

LADY. The poor, yes, and you and I don't qualify. Let's face it, you came because you heard it's a bargain. You knew before you came that the countries that donated it meant for it to be distributed among the poor for free. But you came to buy it still. You shout at those big guys, but you are not different from them. (14)

Coming to an interim solution, like the women in "Kopano ke Matla!" Lady concludes they should be patient and wait in line. Not only the topics are similar to his theatre-for-development projects, but the way his characters approach the problem is very similar to the way that women improvised their dialogue in the theatre-for-development projects.

In spite of theatre-for-development resonances, *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* has additional dramatic value since it has stereotypical but interesting characters engaged in instructive but entertaining dialogue. David Graver suggests that *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* is like "resistance drama" but is not reduced to a simplistic dichotomy of oppressor and oppressed (8). Loren Kruger elaborates on this idea explaining, that because we neither see characters that represent the system, nor those operating the bureaucracy, the play emphasises the "affluent remoteness" of the oppressors and the "impersonal nature" of bureaucracy (189). Graver suggests that the play goes beyond being merely pedagogical, saying "his play teaches, but it cannot be reduced to a lesson" (10). Unlike popular protest theatre that "makes a statement of disapproval or disagreement, but does not go

beyond that....[and] never offers any solution beyond the depiction of the sad situation in which the people find themselves," (Mda, "Politics" 200), *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* begins to suggest possibilities for empowerment. Finally, there is tension between the call-to-action content of the play and the play's target audience. At first glance, the content does not appear to speak directly to the play's initial audiences. Although *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* was first performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Theatre festival, David Graver believes the play was intended for "township audiences and venues" (8).[7] Mda hoped his play would help to conscientise the urban poor in Southern Africa who did not have the opportunity to do theatre-for-development themselves. But while it is important to write for a specific audience, he also wrote his play for a combination of Southern African upper class and international people who may be able to take the lessons learned from theatre-for-development, and find ways to change the superstructure or system affecting women like those in *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses.* As Woman says, "We are all victims of the social order that allows this to happen" (20). Poor women have such limited choices but perhaps if the rich are willing to give up some power, the poor and rich can change the social order together. The play formalizes many of the lessons Mda learned working in theatre-for-development and then expands them to reach out to a broader audience with a diversity of resources and choices.

Exporting Thematic Treatment of Issues from Southern Africa to Canada

As I have demonstrated, Zakes Mda's creative process reflects his experiences in Lesotho, and draws on his work with Maraotholi Theatre. The themes Zakes Mda explores in *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* are specifically located within the Southern African socio-political environment, but because of the way he treats the ideas of racial discrimination, beauty culture, economic opportunities, and apathy, the issues can inspire Canadians to think about the ways those issues impact lives of other marginalized women's groups, or in fact, how they relate to all people.

---

[7] Since Graver included the play in a collection of post-apartheid South African plays, he likely has South African townships in mind, with small, community hall style stages, and black audiences.

The interconnected issues Zakes Mda chooses to profile in *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* could easily have been raised while he was working with Maratholi: race, beauty, money, and the need for revolutionary change. Overwriting all of those issues is the male oppression that women endure daily. "Men…They are all the same," sighs Lady, "They are like the children of one person" (37) indicating the enormity of the problem women face. Waiting in line for the bureaucrats to sell them some rice, the women's anger and frustration is initially focussed on the men who make their lives difficult in terms of the heart and the pocketbook. Woman and Lady have different lessons to learn about themselves, but during the course of the play, both women are shown to undergo a learning process in which they learn to look for self-respect beyond physical beauty and money, and discover that sharing responsibility for their common fate with other women is the beginning of revolution, and the key to dignity.

Race, believes Richard Dyer "is never not a fact, never not in play" (1) yet he observes that "race is something only applied to non-white peoples" (1) and believes that in our world "whiteness is felt to be the human condition" and "defines normality" (9). This means a black person is constantly outside of the norm, even in a country primarily inhabited by black people. "Racism," argues Benedict Anderson, "dreams of eternal contamination" (149) meaning that not only are black people outside of the norm, but their very blackness indicates their constant and perpetual inferiority. Furthermore, a woman's value and worth is often determined through her body and her beauty. Combined with physical attributes, the blackness of the women in the play adds to how they are undervalued as people. Efforts to beautify themselves to become more desirable as lovers or as employees, are negated by the fact that they cannot measure up to the beauty standards established by the white "norm" because they are not white. Blackness influences many aspects of the characters' lives, because a woman's value is related to her beauty, which contributes to her success in maintaining love relationships, and contributes to her ability to find employment in a limited job market. Mda demonstrates through the script how the interplay between attitudes about beauty, blackness and women serve to support a patriarchal and racist system that poor black women cannot get outside.

The first image of racism in the play comes from the arena of beauty culture. While thickly dabbing on makeup to cover skin blemishes caused by lightening creams, the Lady says "we wanted to be white. We bloody hated ourselves" (8). Skin lightening creams contain "hydroquinone", which Lady explains, destroys the skin. The cream makes skin sensitive to sunlight and often people are allergic to it, which causes more damage. Lady, like other black people who had internalized the racism in Southern Africa, preferred to be white rather than black. The surface beauty Lady is driven to achieve is finally undercut at the end of the play when Woman says, "I love you! I think you are a great human being," (37) granting Lady dignity as a woman, as a black person, and as a prostitute because she is a great *human*, whatever else she may be. Unfortunately, internalised racism transfers all too easily to North America. In bell hooks' article, "Back to Black: Ending Internalized Racism," she describes how the "black is beautiful" movement of the 1960s and 1970s tried to combat what she calls the African American "color caste systems" (hooks 71) that discriminate primarily against darker skinned children and women. When the urge to fully participate in white culture grew stronger, "black acceptance of assimilation meant that a politics of representation affirming white beauty standards was being re-established as the norm" (hooks 73). Not only is the issue with us in Canada,[8] but hydroquinone, used as a skin lightener or bleach continues to be available in North America today. Although *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* is located fifteen years ago in Southern Africa, the desire for lightness has been a familiar concept on this side of the ocean since slavery.

Race also influences the women's relationships with their lovers. Apartheid was conceived by South Africa in 1949, when the Populations Registration Act categorized South Africa's racial groups and enforced the Mixed Marriages Act, which forbade marriage between members of two different racial groups. This law, and the later Immorality Act, which went further than the Mixed Marriages Act by making inter-racial sexual relations of any kind illegal, affected Woman in *And the*

[8] Vanaja Dhruvarajan asserts that "people of colour are not included in Canada's self-image. Canadians perceive their country as one of white settlers, and quite often look on people of colour as strangers and outsiders" (100). She also writes that in Canada women of colour "are also not thought of as beautiful or as sexually desirable because conceptions of beauty are based on white standards" (102).

Girls in their Sunday Dresses who had an Italian lover who would not marry her in Lesotho, and could not marry her when they went to South Africa.[9] Woman relates her past experiences to Lady explaining that she had to pose as his maid to avoid harassment by the police, and even so she and her lover jumped every time there was a knock at the door. "But you knew when we came here that there were strange laws in this country," pleaded Woman when her lover threatened to leave. She tells Lady that he replied "Yeah, I knew, but I didn't think it would be so bad" (25). Although Woman avoided being caught with her lover, not all women were so lucky. In reality, many mixed race couples were pursued by the police and their homes were invaded and smashed up. If mixed race couples were convicted, they went to jail. Black people often got harsher sentences than their white lovers. Both the mixed marriage and immorality acts were repealed in 1987, but the racism and the effects of these laws scarred Southern Africa in ways that continue to be problematic.

Finally, Zakes Mda subtly indicates how racial discrimination, combined with economic desperation, also impacts job opportunities for women. The options open to women in urban Southern Africa primarily focus on the tasks of the domestic sphere: housecleaning, cooking, child care, and sex. An office job may be open to a woman with higher education in Lesotho, but in South Africa the racism was so institutionalised that non-domestic work would have been uncommon. The women in the play are performing two of the most reviled jobs in Southern Africa. When Woman asks Lady why she "chose" to be a prostitute, even though she came from a happy and well off family, Lady shouts, "Choice! Godammit, can't a woman choose what she wants to do with her life?" (12). At one point Lady explains she is a prostitute to take revenge on her Italian lover who left her. She imagines she sees him in all men. But in fact, she does not reject the idea of a relationship with a man because she continues to hope for a man to rescue her through marriage. Her desire to be saved from her life indicates that she does not really want to be a prostitute; it is a necessity:

[9] To contrast the South African situation, Zakes Mda mentions that in Lesotho the Lady takes local, European and African-American clients. European men do occasionally marry the prostitutes, and take them back to Europe with them.

LADY. Men are all the same. That is why I got into this profession. I have been used. So I use them. The men I sleep with, in them I see the Italian chef. All of them are representative of him. That's why I am going to lay them to death, and take their money to boot. I hate the bastards, sister woman.

WOMAN. Yet you make love to them.

LADY. Those are johns. They are not human beings. Even as they undress I look at them and I feel like spitting all over their shrivelled bodies. I find them pathetic. Pathetic and disgusting creatures. I wish I had AIDS, then I'd spread it like wild fire. Kill all the bastards. (20)

Lady also acknowledges that covert prostitution exists throughout the Southern African job market. Standing in the interminable line, Woman says admiringly, "Don't the office girls look beautiful in their summer dresses?" (6) But Lady suggests that pretty dresses may be the only advantage to working there. "Many of them have to sleep with someone to get their jobs. They have to lay some dirty old man to get a promotion" (19). Since Lady managed to get by without a pimp, she points to the office girls, saying, "We are in the same profession, sister woman. Only I do it openly and on my terms, as a free agent" (19). The sad fact of sexual exploitation of female employees further reflects how limited employment choices were and are in Southern Africa, even for the rare black women with higher education.

Sex work was also in the initial job description for Woman, who, like many domestic workers in Southern Africa, also slept with her boss (Cock 179). After her lover abandoned her, she was no longer a personal maid either, so she had to take a job cleaning flats to pay the rent he did not pay (25). The problems of apartheid era domestic workers would have been familiar to contemporary South African audiences, but I was not aware of how pervasive the problems were, or how very few options the women had. According to Jacklyn Cock, the struggles of domestic workers result from the convergence of "two systems of racial and sexual domination that creates particular powerlessness and vulnerability of black women" (14). She calls it the "ultra-exploitability" of domestic workers. Cock argues that in the 1970s and 1980s, domestic workers in South Africa were "in a legal vacuum" because there

were no laws stipulating minimum wages, hours of work, or conditions of service (62). Furthermore, domestic servants were easy prey to sexual advances of male employers. Ironically, this situation may have actually worsened after the Immorality Act was repealed in 1987, as some feminists warned (80). Not only were many domestic workers mistreated by their employers, they were also mocked by their own families. Cock explains, "in Southern African society domestic service is the least prestigious of all occupations" (59). In the play, when Lady spits, "You clean their filth! You are not better off!" (30), she parrots the generally accepted opinion: women who cleaned homes had little respect. It is hardly surprising that Woman admits "there has been a lot of pain" where she works (28).

In 1986, the South African Domestic Workers Union (SADWU) was launched, and within two years, it had 52,000 members (Cock 152). At the time Mda wrote the play, the union was almost brand new, so this is the union Woman joins, although smaller women workers' unions existed previously. Smaller women's unions had previously achieved some success, so Mda had good reason for Woman to say "Things are still bad, but we are going to win" (26). One successful instance of women's organised action was to protest the freeing of a man accused of raping a young girl. The women organised a "stayaway," the name given to the political action women took by refusing to come to work in town for any reason. Although the white population became angry rather than sympathetic, the action did show women that they could protest together. One member who was interrogated by the police explained, "The police asked me who was behind the stayaway. They couldn't believe women organised it themselves. They detained the male activists, because they think men are behind everything women do" (Kolka Nkwinti in Cock, 154). When Mda wrote *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses,* SADWU was on the cutting edge of politics for women; it was new, current, and very important. Similar organisations for prostitutes may not have existed, but as I explained, domestic workers had very little status in society as well. The need for money, and possibly financial independence, was the only reason to take up these two traditionally female and maligned occupations.

Racial discrimination is an acknowledged reality in South Africa, but it also exists in Canada in many areas, including employment for women of colour, and is apparent in the treatment of new immigrants. Vanaja Dhruvarajan describes how immigrant women tend to enter the country on "family class" rather than "independent class" which reduces their options for government assistance such as subsidies for courses in one of Canada's official languages (101). Furthermore, even if the woman speaks the language, or does not need it for the job, Dhruvarajan argues that systemic racism exists within the Canadian job market because of how informal networks operate. Marginalised groups do not have access to information through networks of friends since these women are not within the realm of acquaintance of employers (Dhurvarajan 114). Stereotypes also work against women of colour when they are trying to find employment. Dhurvarajan claims that there are common stereotypes of black women. Some people believe that black women have "questionable femininity" (102) and that they are "strident and aggressive" (113). To say that the racism in Canada is not as overt as it was in apartheid South Africa is obvious but it is important to acknowledge that racism operates here too, and that it affects employment opportunities and options for marginalised women in Canada as well.

The women in *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* are also concerned about the importance of female beauty and the culture of beauty, which affects their attitudes about their self-worth and their economic opportunities. In order to be beautiful, money is necessary. The piles of make-up "to improve their looks (8)", and the beautiful Sunday, summer, and winter dresses, which the Woman has never had, all cost money. The women discuss and lament this recurring theme throughout the play. "Sunday dresses are not only worn on Sundays," explains Lady, "They are worn on any day when one wants to look beautiful" (34). Even though people like Woman might want to look beautiful as often as the office girls, the option simply is not there because she does not have the money to spend. Although Lady asserts, "Even now that I don't earn anything you can see that I haven't lost my taste for a good cloth" (29), we know that the poorer she becomes, the less people will be willing to accept her judgement regarding clothes or beauty. Woman, whose poverty

has prevented her from having pretty clothes, is already taunted by Lady for her lack of beauty expertise:

LADY. [*She has finished her make-up*] There! You see! As good as new. You should try some of this stuff too.

WOMAN. No thanks.

LADY. How old are you?

WOMAN. About forty.

LADY. See what I mean? We are about the same age, but look at you. Frumpy!

WOMAN. I think I am all right the way I am.

LADY. You think so. But do other people think so? (9)

Later Lady says, "I don't want to seem disagreeable, sister woman, but you don't know much about summer dresses. To you those are beautiful because you don't have much expertise on clothing" (29). Lady seems to suggest Woman is less of a person because she does not wear make up or know about fashion. Beauty is important to self worth, but Mda uses Lady's comments about the office girls to indicate that beauty is also important for getting and keeping work (19). This is a challenge when looking beautiful requires money.

"We are not so selfish as to look beautiful for our own selves, you know," says Lady. "We do it for other people, so that they should have something to admire" (9). Lady and Woman demonstrate that much of their self worth is tied up in this very statement. Like women all over the world, they need to look beautiful for others, and usually the others are men. Even the comparatively independent Woman exclaims to Lady, "You are such a beautiful woman. You could have made some lucky man a good wife," (12) implying that beauty is always closely connected to men and their power over women. Lady pushes the connection further between male power and female beauty when she talks about how her age prevents her from getting clients anymore. "They find you when you are nice and fresh and young," Lady complains. "I was young once, sister woman. I was young and beautiful. I was the campus queen" (19). But the johns no longer come to her, even though she is still beautiful. She knew that she would not be able to hold their attention forever, but she is still relying on physical beauty to get by and admits that she is perpetuating the problem

through her daughter: "I thought my daughter would be my insurance in my old age. She is a beautiful little thing," (20). Even the office girls need their beauty to keep their jobs, or to get a promotion, since they must win the attentions of one of their male bosses. At least beauty is an acknowledged asset for prostitution, and when it fades, like youth, there is no longer any work. In both the office and in prostitution, it appears that without beauty, a woman in Southern Africa cannot be successful and self supporting. One profession (prostitution) admits it openly, while others do not. The play supports the idea that beautiful people are more likely to hold positions of management, and women sleep with their superiors in order to be promoted.

Beautiful women can hope that men will save them from the drudgery of their working lives, and both women in *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* initially want to be rescued. Even when Lady is in university, the reason she loved her man is that "he lavished all his love and money on me" (19), and when Woman's partner leaves her, she runs out of groceries and sobs to the building manager, acknowledging her financial dependency on her partner and begging for rescue: "I don't have any money so I can't pay rent!" (25). Dependence on men nearly destroys both of them, but Lady continues to hope for a saviour even after she becomes a prostitute. "All of us who do our rounds," she sighs, "we are looking for a john who will fall head over heels, and marry" (21). The women who find a rich man to make them a mistress or take them home to Europe can afford to become respectable, to be "saved" by Jesus and by the man who rescues them, and renounce their former, less wholesome lives. Beauty can give a woman power, dignity, and respect, Lady seems to believe. Yet the play portrays the idea that relying on beauty to define their worth means that they, like Canadian women in the audience who adhere to media's images of beauty, are constantly being defined by men, and that gives men power over them. Mda uses the play to show women how destructive attitudes about beauty are, and how dependence on men can be dangerous. He wants women to define themselves according to different criteria and to strive for independence rather than rescue.

The poor women in *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* are left little room for choices because the system privileges people who are male, rich, white, or beautiful. As a result of those restrictions, the women also suffer from apathy. Like the theatre-

for-development projects he worked on in Lesotho, Mda optimistically uses the script to demonstrate that women do not have to accept their suffering as if they deserve it. The challenge is to try to figure out what alternative actions can be taken. At the beginning of the play, Lady says "Sooner or later this nation will learn from me....Let's relax while waiting for something to happen" (10). Even the action-oriented Woman admits she has been waiting because she is apathetic:

LADY. But what I don't understand is you say you don't take any abuse, but you have been waiting here with the rest of us. (27)

WOMAN. [laughs] Through your persuasion. But frankly though, I suffer from the same disease from which we all seem to suffer. We say: Well, this is home, we are prepared to accept shoddiness. We are still a young nation so these things are expected to happen. In other words what we are saying is that we don't think we are capable of producing the best results, so we are prepared to tolerate inefficiency and corruption. (28)

Even very near the end of the play, the women muse without taking action:

WOMAN...Tell me, why are we still here? Why are we still waiting? We are even fighting over the use of the chair. Because we are waiting. Life passes by and we are onlookers. We are like the sedated who slept through a revolution.

LADY [determined]. I was never an onlooker. I am all action. When the revolution comes I want to carry a gun. I don't sit on the sidelines and darn socks for the fighters.

WOMAN. It is here already.

LADY. Well, I haven't seen much of it. I am still waiting for it, and when it comes...

WOMAN. You don't wait for a revolution. You make it happen. (33)

For a long time, even after that exchange, neither woman does anything other than wait in line. When Woman is angry that the trucks jump the queue and buy rice which will later be sold for higher prices, she sighs in exasperation "I need the rice but I am not prepared to wallow in degradation for it" (16). Torn between the desire for self-respect and action, and the need for food, the women stay in line another day. Meanwhile, even though Woman constantly pushes Lady to see that she does not

"have to take abuse from anyone" (27), and suggests that. by hauling the chair around with her, she accepts the bureaucratic snail's pace and the corruption that goes with it, they both remain in line. Woman claims she has no time for bitterness and refuses to live in the past. She admits "We are all victims of the social order that allows this to happen" (20) but claims she looks for proactive solutions to the problems rather than vengeance. Yet just as Lady uses men since she was used herself, hoping "to lay them to death, and take their money to boot" (20), Woman spends the first part of the play ineffectually shouting at the bureaucratic workers and insulting them, claiming she will leave, but staying anyway. Only when they imagine the intolerable final indignities of going through the line to get rice, and when Woman's revolutionary rhetoric begins to affect Lady, does Lady actually refuse to wait:

LADY. That, sister woman, is what we'll go through.

WOMAN. At least now everything will be over and done away with.

LADY. I am not going through with it.

WOMAN. You are not.

LADY. No. I am not. I am going home now, and I am not taking the chair. (34)

Watching the women wait in line for so long demonstrates how important the cheap food is to the women and how difficult the decision to leave. The decision to refuse to wait and go home, to not to be onlookers who endure the promise of further indignities in the line up, and to leave behind the chair which makes it easier to wait, gives the women a symbolic power beyond money or beauty because it gives them self-respect.

Nevertheless, their decision to go home is not easy, and does not assure the women of a happy ending. It highlights how very limited their choices are: to stand in line bravely and endure the indignities of a disrespectful bureaucracy or leave and have very little money to live. When Lady says "I know that never again will I need the food-aid rice, and my chair of patience" (37) the audience cannot reasonably share her confident optimism. The choices ahead will continue to be difficult. What remains important is that, in spite of their difference,s the women leave together. After Woman says "Of course I am coming. I am coming" (37) Mda's stage directions read "*...There is a great warmth between them. They hold each other's*

hands and there is a pause for a while" (37). In that pause we must see the importance of their solidarity. In spite of their different interests, values, and histories, by standing together as women, they are stronger. The ending could be full of hollow hope if it were not for the recognition that they must support each other.

Brecht and the Intercultural Theatre Transfer

The ending of *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* is a call to action in the same way that many of Bertolt Brecht's[10] plays excite the audience to demand changes. Brecht's theatre, aimed at conscientisation, fits well in the African theatre environment where David Graver argues African spectators are less interested in sentiment and emotional flux and more interested in performance virtuosity, ideas and arguments, than North American audiences (13). If it is true that South African audiences are more predisposed than North American audiences to appreciate ideas and arguments in plays, then when *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* is performed in Canada, the Canadian audience may benefit from a thoughtful production that focuses on ways to make ideas and arguments easier for the Canadian audience to digest. As a result, Brecht's techniques are likely to become all the more important to employ. Graver further cautions would-be producers that circumstances for many South African plays are "too far from the typical circumstances of North American theatrical production to serve a similar social function here" (13). Similarly, in an article for *The Iowa Review* she wrote about Zakes Mda's work, after spending time in South Africa, Sarah Ruder seems to further Graver's point, saying "There are vast cultural differences that make black African authors – even the black authors writing in English in relatively cosmopolitan South Africa – hard for Americans and Europeans to appreciate" (155). She adds that for her, his "politics

[10] Rhoma Spencer drew my attention to the fact that Mda's script was profoundly influenced by Bertolt Brecht and his ideas about didactic theatre. For that reason she used Brecht's ideas in developing her interpretation of the script. After doing further research I discovered that Ola Rotimi suggests that many of Brecht's ideas are actually present in African (his example is primarily Nigerian, although he claims to speak of the whole continent) theatre already. "It does not follow that to be foreign is to be unfamiliar," (Rotimi, "Much" 253) he explains, further highlighting ways in which Brecht's epic theatre techniques "were already in vogue in traditional African theatre practice" (253) long before scholars in Africa began discussing them. Mda's primary influence may have been traditional African theatre techniques, but his work with theatre-for-development suggests that he used Brecht's ideas.

have a certain staleness" and asks "what does a Western audience make of it all? Probably not a great deal" (160).[11] Yet it is precisely this intercultural alienation described by Graver and Ruder that a director could exploit by using Brechtian techniques that would not only foreground the challenging issues for women everywhere, but would directly call Canadians in the audience to action.

The audience must be able to see that it is possible for women to make choices that will effect change in their lives if a play like *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* is to be meaningful. In "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre," Brecht claims the epic theatre will arouse the spectator's capacity for action and that the spectator will see that "he is alterable and able to alter" (37). Feminists have found several of Brecht's theories and techniques useful for reflecting not only class, but gender relations as well.[12] By using *verfremdungseffekt*, gestus, the "not... but", and historicization,[13] to structure my discussion of the production I saw of *And the Girls and Their Sunday Dresses*, I will demonstrate that using Brecht's methods can highlight class and gender issues, and it can also facilitate intercultural theatre transfer. I will examine the ways Rhoma Spencer employed Brecht's ideas in her production and suggest ways she could have gone further to create the kind of performance which would have carried this playwright's message as emphatically as possible, and thus facilitate even more meaningful communication.

V-effekt

Brecht's concept of the *verfremdungseffekt*, V-effekt, or alienation effect, often consists of turning an object from something ordinary and immediately accessible into something peculiar, striking and unexpected. Making the familiar unfamiliar changes the way an audience sees a particular object or relationship, and therefore, makes it easier to think critically about it.

---

[11] Ruder uses the phrase "Western" but since she is an American, her perspective comes from that part of the "West."

[12] One early article connecting Brecht and Feminist Performance Theory was Elin Diamond's 1988 "Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory." Her ideas focus on the relationship between the audience and the actors and the desire to make an impact that will encourage the spectators to continue to think about the play even after they have left the theatre.

[13] "Historicization" is a term used by Elin Diamond in the above mentioned article.

Rhoma Spencer intentionally alienated her audience with the frame she selected for the play and with her shadow montage, although she did not use alienation in character presentation as much as she could have. The frame Spencer developed directly echoed the line the women stand in during the course of the play. Prior to entering the theatre each patron had to go through a long, twisting line up. Along the line, patrons were required to stop, fill out forms, answer questions, and take forms to people at the end of a second line. Recounting my personal experience will give some sense of what she was trying to do. The Front of House volunteers asked me questions about my age, number of teeth, and occupation before I bought a ticket, and then different volunteers asked more irrational questions before I received one, echoing the absurd bureaucratic excesses in the play. This long line was something familiar to Canadians, but suddenly made unfamiliar, striking, and unexpected. The strangeness was supposed to draw attention to the pointless waiting and the fact that Canadians spend an inordinate amount of time standing in line, filling out forms, and waiting for something to happen. At the same time, Spencer also wanted to give Canadians a taste of what it is like to like in a country where everything requires an endless queue. Since the performance I attended was sold out, the conceit worked exactly as Spencer had planned, and effectively drew attention to the absurdities of waiting. The line was long, I could not figure out what was going on at the front, why things were taking so much time, or why I was waiting. As Spencer had no doubt intended, I was mildly irritated and confused, but I waited anyway, because I wanted to see the play. Although at the outset it seemed like an excellent way to include the audience in the story, in the end it echoed the play too closely, giving me a sense of empathy for the characters, rather than making me angry about the social conditions that lead to their powerlessness. Furthermore, I was sympathetic, but I did not immediately connect it to the bureaucratic excesses we experience in Canada, as producer Modupe Olaogun intended. In order to make me more critical of the bureaucracy that affects the lives of Canadians, it might have been more useful to use Canadian forms. Perhaps the indignities of welfare or employment insurance questionnaires, rather than the same ludicrous questions about the number of teeth I have, would have been more effective at helping me to engage critically with the

frame. However in the form that she presented the frame, at least it warned the audience not to be overly critical of the characters' decision to wait, because we waited too, and we are not so different from them.

Spencer used a different V-effekt technique during the show to encourage the audience to critique bureaucratic power structures. Represented by shadow projections on the sky cloth, the office workers operated as a constant but unknowable and inaccessible backdrop to the lives of the women on stage. At various times during the play, shadows of men and women (performed by two unseen actors) walked past, dawdled, or had conversations. The audience knew the shadows were the office workers because very near the beginning of the play when Woman comments that the office workers are going for lunch (6), the actor gestured towards the shadows as they appeared to walk away. Not seeing office workers' faces helped to demonstrate how far removed the women were from the system that controlled their lives. The shadow people never reacted to the women, no matter what they did or said. Theatre critic Rebecca Caldwell wrote that the "perfectly wrought shadow projection added a layer of visual poetry to the production" (R9). During my interview with the director, Rhoma Spencer told me that the shadows were her favourite part of the production and I also found them to be memorable. The visually striking and surprising representation of a faceless administrative system forced me to think about what those office workers represented to me.

Although Spencer's production made use of the V-effekt in terms of the frame and the shadow montage, it was not used as part of an acting style. "In performance the actor 'alienates' rather than impersonates her character;" explains Diamond ("Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory" 1988), and "[the actor] 'quotes' or demonstrates the character's behaviour instead of identifying with it" (84). The technique strives to encourage the audience to have opinions about the action, rather than feelings. Spencer explained that she coached the actors in such a way that the audience would not become emotionally involved in the story of the women, and probably would have liked to have done more, since she told me "Theatre in Canada is almost like TV and audiences are usually used to film…[we needed to] get away from a realistic style of acting." In a performance that more completely reflected my

interpretation of Brecht's ideas, it would have been better if the actors occasionally stepped outside of their characters and quoted them or commented on their choices because it would have created an exciting tension within the performance. Actors could problematize and comment on lines about economic opportunity. Examples include Lady's line, "Choice! Godammit, can't a woman choose what she wants to do with her life?" (12); or Woman's comment to her, "You could have easily become like one of the office girls who have been coming in and out of this yard in their beautiful Sunday dresses," (18); or Woman's line about her trip to South Africa, "so I passed as his maid. Which in any case I was, besides the fact that we were lovers also" (35). All these moments in the play are double edged because the decisions the characters make and relationships they have do not happen as carelessly as the lines imply. Even Woman's line near the end of the play, "But we should demand a change and be willing to suffer for it, rather than suffer in silence as we have been doing here," (33) deserves a critical acting style, in which the actor can step away and listen to herself say those things which are so much more easily spoken than accomplished. A more alienating acting style that consciously critiques certain moments as they are performed encourages audience members to be more critical of the choices the characters made and the situation that encouraged them to make those choices.

Gestus

According to Brecht, gestus is an action on stage that has social and cultural relations encoded within it. In his "Short Organum for the Theatre," he writes "Physical attitude, tone of voice and facial expression are all determined by a social gest" (198); editor John Willet explains that gest means "both gist and gesture; an attitude or a single aspect of an attitude expressible in words or actions" (42). Brecht, of course, was primarily interested in the "socially significant gest" (Brecht 86), that is, the gest that indicates something about social relations. For the women in the play, their class, occupation, and gender all could carry social gests. Spencer clearly encouraged her actors to develop particular gests to demonstrate their characters. The very act of waiting in line becomes a social gest indicative of poverty and

powerlessness. The fact that the women are forced to wait on the whims of others operates a social gest for their class. Meanwhile, in terms gests representing occupation, Lady constantly reapplies her lipstick, and Woman stands confrontationally with arms folded or she paces. The first gesture indicates Lady's dependence on beauty culture for her work, the second indicates Woman's need for constant action in her life as an activist. However, despite the feminist nature of the play, Spencer chose not to problematize gender. In my following comments, I will suggest ways in which Spencer could have used more conscious "gests" to indicate the gender oppression these women suffer.

Diamond believes the performance of gender itself is full of gestus because when spectators see gender "they are seeing (and reproducing) cultural signs of gender and by implication the gender of ideology of a culture" (84). If Lady had adopted a stereotypical "sexy" gestus in the early part of the play, or Woman had developed a stereotypical "saintly mother" gestus, then the audience could have witnessed their shedding of these poses. "When gender is 'alienated' or foregrounded," explains Diamond, "the spectator is enabled to see a sign system *as* a sign system – the appearance, words, gestures, ideas, attitudes, etc. that comprise the gender lexicon become so many illusionistic trappings to be put on or shed at will" (85). If the audience was allowed to see that the women could choose how to define themselves, then they could see that the culturally encoded gest could be rejected just as it could be adopted. Better still, if the audience can see how the characters relate their female-ness to the patriarchy, then it calls into question that powerful ideology (Diamond 91). One way to do that would be to have the characters change their physical gests when talking about different men: the johns, the Italian lover, the young man who was shot, the office managers, the building manager, and the European saviours, all of whom perform different functions within the patriarchal system. Such a performance would demonstrate how the power women encounter alters their ability to define themselves, forcing them to present themselves in a particular way or to fulfill a role in a particular way. The audience could see how female-ness changes in relation to men as opposed to with women. A conscious and judicious use of social

gestus could foreground issues that the play confronts, but which may be subsumed by the narrative.

Not...but

A third useful technique is the "not... but." This technique highlights the choices characters make and is particularly important for this play because the women are able to make very few choices. Brecht suggests that when an actor makes a choice, the audience should see, within that choice, the decision the actor chose *not* to make as well: "Whatever he doesn't do must be contained and conserved in what he does. In this way every sentence and every gesture signifies a decision" (Brecht 137). The result is that the actor is choosing *not* to do one thing *but* to do something else.[14] This method "invites the participatory play of the spectator and the possibility for which Brecht most devoutly wished, that the significance (the production of meaning) continue beyond play's end, congealing into choice and action after the theatre" (Diamond 86).

Here again, I will make some suggestions as to how Spencer could have played the "not...but" dialectic. Problematizing even relatively insignificant decisions could highlight how little power the women have. For example, when the women decide to insult one another or to be kind to each other, there are other possible actions. When Woman says, "We can all lose our temper if we want to, you know. We've all got it somewhere, and we can just as easily lose it" (6), more tension would be created if we could see that she, too, is making the choice to keep calm. On the other hand, when she decides to yell at the office workers, saying "As you chew think of us who are sitting here in the hot sun, and in the rain!" (6), we should see that in this case, while she could be polite, she chooses not to be. The "not...but" is especially important in this play, because in the end, the choice the women make is hardly empowering at all. And yet, the script is built in such a way that the "not...but" could be played. If the audience saw that all the little choices that the characters make during the course of

[14] Gay Gibson Cima writes that the Collective actor takes this idea one step further. "Instead of playing out the "not this *but* that" of the familiar alienation effect, the Collective actor juggles both dialectical choices presented to the character, thus suggesting the character's desire to do "not this *and* not that." The Collective actor imagined herein gestures toward the past and the present to suggest future possibilities, encouraging the audience to write beyond the ending" (Cima 92).

the play are times when the characters exercise their own will, the moment at the end could seem more hopeful because each small decision would be understood as a each one is a victory for asserting a character's control over her life.

Historicization

Historicization suggests that change is possible, or at least shows that a particular situation is bounded by specific historical circumstances and is not an eternal condition. The term is used as both a feminist and Brechtian technique that encourages the audience to see the development of a particular narrative within a particular historical context, while at particular intervals during the performance, foregrounding a present perspective on the events. The focus on change means that choices must be augmented by a critical understanding that social relations are built within a particular context and that, if people can recognise the structures surrounding social relations, people can change that context and the attitudes that uphold it. This different way of seeing the performance both allows for the specificity of a particular moment, while allowing the audience to see ways that it could be different in the present. For example, when Woman is talking about SADWU and says, "We struggle for better wages and better working conditions. Things are still bad, but we are going to win" (131), the audience should be able to see the statement within 1988's grim optimism, and also within today's understanding that women's working conditions and wages in Southern Africa are still very poor. Spencer specifically located the characters in a very particular time and environment, Lesotho in the 1980s, yet the piece should not go into a museum state because the actor is always both herself and her historical subject (the character). The actor's understanding of her character's historical subject necessarily changes. Her emphasis on what is important, what makes sense, and what sounds foolish relate to her own time and place and understanding of the world elswhere. If Sarah Ruder, the critic I mentioned earlier, felt the production of *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* she saw was meaningless to Western audiences, it may be that she did not find the actors were engaging with their own present to understand the past. I think that Spencer's production could have been improved as well if it effectively engaged with local,

current realities. By consciously historicising, the production avoids becoming museum theatre, and the script can be very meaningful even outside of its original environment.

Historicization can help transport a foreign text through time. It allows the text to be where it is and what it is, while still allowing the actors to comment on it and inject some of their own current understanding of the world onto the script. Without historical hindsight, we could not see the sadness in Lady's statement, "I know that never again will I need the food-aid rice," since conditions of poverty in Southern Africa are not getting better. Historicity allows a Canadian audience to bring to bear their knowledge of Canada and the situation here. Audiences should acknowledge that in Canada, too, there are power relations which keep the poor weak, and that individual choices can change the lives of local people in Canada as well.

For Canadians, locating the play in a particular historical context also sheds light on the real problems of the international aid system. The characters' interpretation of how aid operates, and the ways that it impacts the lives of the poor, needs to be specifically located so that it can give Canadian audiences pause. The women understand that Italian rice is sent to Lesotho as food aid to be given to the very poorest people. "If it's food aid" says Woman, "it must be given to the poor for free. And in many cases it helps to keep them where they are – poor" (14). Instead, a Lesotho agency resells the rice at bargain prices which naturally affects locally producers, and allows retailers to buy the rice for resale. Lady demonstrates how they are encouraged to become part of a corrupt economic system, saying "You shout at those big guys, but you are not different from them" (14). The distribution of international aid from countries that may also include Canada, appears to be stymied by corruption and bureaucracy, and may actually be to the detriment of poor citizens. Since Mda does not propose solutions to produce the play in a way that highlights this pivotal issue, I would research the food-aid situation to find out where it stands now, and then be sure the play is able to comment on Canada's present involvement in aid programming. Historicity can demonstrate that there is potential movement in economic relations, international relations, or class relations, and that people can change their own perceptions, and thus their lives.

When Diamond concludes her analysis of Brecht's techniques as they relate to feminism, she talks about ways that Brechtian intervention can be used to represent female characters as active agents, giving them a subjectivity which refuses the objectification associated with the male gaze. She writes that since the actor creates a representation that refuses fixity, she does not have to represent "to-be-looked-at-ness" but rather can be "looking-at-being-looked-at-ness" or even "looking-ness" (89). Of all the techniques mentioned, this one may have been the most valuable to the Canadian audience. If the women on stage had allowed themselves to *see* us watching them, the immediacy of their situation might have had greater impact. Their gaze at us could challenge us to make choices, but could also include us in their fate. The actors in Spencer's production did not do that. Instead, they remained behind the fourth wall, never seeing the people who watched them, and ultimately, as an individual spectator, I felt cold and distanced from this production. But if they had included me within their struggle, by seeing me as I was seeing them, I could have joined them as they left the line together, optimistic and ready to make choices for change, no matter how difficult they may be.

Brechtian Techniques

The Brechtian techniques all help to bring Mda's teaching play to a Canadian stage: the denaturalizing, defamiliarizing V-effekt, which challenges what ideology makes seem normal, acceptable, and inescapable (Diamond 85); the specific quality of social gestus that exposes social and economic relations and the way that people adopt particular roles within a socio-economic system; the challenge of exposing the fact that people are constantly choosing not this but something else; and the possibility of change highlighted by historicity. Rhoma Spencer made use of the v-effekt with her frame and her shadow montage, but the audience would have benefited from employing the v-effekt in the acting style. Employing a gestus that commented more specifically on the character's femaleness, and choosing to expose the "not…but" in the decision making process both would have helped the audience to consider issues about gender, and would have helped them to see how very limited the women's choices were. This would help the audience to see the women's final

choices, at the end of the play, seem more powerful and sad. Ensuring that the production was specifically located within in an historical context, while maintaining awareness of related current social realities, would save the play from working as an apartheid museum piece and would more directly connect the audience to the work because the actors would comment on the production from a Canadian present. Finally, encouraging the actors to actually look directly at the audience would connect each person to their fate, so that the women are no longer in an objectified state of looked-at-ness but become subjects as they are looking-at-being-looked-at. The subject matter of *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* is far from being stale, as Ruder suggested, but it does need to be supported with a directing style that improves the readability of the themes.

Conclusions

And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses raises numerous issues which would be relevant to a Canadian audience just as they would be to a Southern African one. The inherent aesthetic merit of *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* is apparent because the script has already survived a tumultuous decade of change in Southern Africa. The script is well crafted, the characters are interesting, and the issues are sufficiently significant that the play is transferable to a different culture, distant in terms of time and space. The play sets out to teach and to question the dominant patriarchy and its economic and social impact on the lives of poor women, and it does that successfully. It also intends to present a tiny fragment of life, a small event in the imaginary history of Southern Africa, a conversation between two women, which is not going to change the world, but could change the world for them. Perhaps because it is not epic or ambitious in its scope, the piece resonates with a vitality that probably comes from its connection to real conversations Mda had with poor women in Lesotho while doing his theatre-for-development projects. The level of specificity provided by Mda's extensive research, his decision to have the play deal with very local, particular issues, and to be set within a distinct location, does not interfere with its transferability but rather gives the audience grounding, something to hold on to, something particular to consider.

In terms of intercultural theatre transfer, this production highlights the importance of carefully choosing methods to deal with the issues the "hourglass" highlights. Using theatre-for-development and Brechtian theatre techniques is helpful for this script because of its roots and the themes it considers. By effectively employing these techniques, the "hourglass of cultures" becomes a useful tool for planning and producing intercultural theatre.

Chapter 4: Conclusions

When I began this thesis, I aimed to learn more about the intercultural theatre process, and about the challenges related to bringing unfamiliar and foreign theatre to Canadian audiences. I chose three plays that had already been performed in Canada primarily because I could use their performances as case studies, and also because they were created in response to very specific socio-political circumstances, to elicit responsive, social action from their audiences. With the inherent challenges of political theatre compounded by the issues of cultural transfer, I wondered if the messages could continue to be meaningful so far from the source.

Conducting my analysis in this way required that I shift subject positions regularly, depending on what part of the "hourglass" I was working through. Sometimes analysing what I reconstructed in my imagination, sometimes what I actually saw, sometimes what choices could have been made, I positioned myself as researcher, company dramaturge, company director, or audience member. This constant movement permitted me to make observations throughout the production process, but because my access to concrete data was often limited, I frequently relied on hypotheses concerning what actually happened. What this experience has made clear is that in future studies, the researcher should be present throughout the creation of the case study performance. He or she should conduct more interviews, should observe the production process, and should survey the audience, all of which would provide a more complete picture of the transfer of theatre from one culture to another.

In the first chapter, by employing Pavis's "hourglass of cultures" to analyse the Hart House Theatre production of *Madmen and Specialists* (2001) I found that the model is very helpful for identifying some issues in performing a particular play in a foreign country. Rustom Bharucha complains that the model is too linear and ordered to adequately account for erratic choices, unexpected interventions, or the elliptically human processes of decision making: "At no point does it move in straight lines, as Patrice Pavis suggests... the translation process is constantly being interrupted, reversed and questioned from multiple angles so that the determinism of source and target cultures are subjected relentlessly to reflexives and collective scrutiny"

(*Politics* 79). Yet the restrictions of Pavis's model are necessary in order for it to be a useful production tool. It is true that the hourglass was altered by the hybridity of the texts I used, and the heterogeneity of the artistic teams and audiences, but the linearity also serves the purpose of aiding in planning. By following the hourglass through from top to bottom, the tool can be used by directors to predict potential challenges, and as a launch point for planning creative solutions.

In the second and third chapters, I experimented with possible creative solutions to issues highlighted by certain filters of the hourglass, using different plays as case studies. Using Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not To Blame* I examined the tensions created by Bayo Akinfemi's Canadian production and Rotimi's goals of Africanisation along with Akinfemi's goals of authenticity. With Zakes Mda's *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses,* I analysed ways that theatre-for-development and Brechtian performance techniques could address concerns raised by the hourglass and make for effective intercultural theatre. In both plays, I discovered ways in which the productions might create a third space, within tensions between familiar and foreign, translating and not translating, maintaining cultural specificity and making adaptations.

Hybridity and globalisation interfere with linear predictability in the hourglass model. From the script right through to the audience, there is no evidence of "pure" culture. Whether the source is Nigeria or South Africa, the playwright has been trained extensively in European and American cultural models through the education system and through popular culture. *Madmen and Specialists* uses Yoruba mythology and Nigerian contemporary history, as well as a Western play structure, Christian mythology and Socratic thought. *The Gods Are Not To Blame* uses Nigerian proverbs, song, and dance, as well as Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. And finally while *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* uses Sotho and Southern African women's issues, it also uses Brecht and scripted theatre-for-development. The intellectual preparation for much of the source cultural artefacts was of target origin, and translated to the context of the source's culture by playwrights who from the beginning bridge the two cultures. The Canadian target culture is far from a monoculture either. In *Madmen and Specialists,* the director was Nigerian, the actors were Caribbean-Canadian,

African-Canadian, and American, while the designer was Italian-Canadian and the dramaturge was from Slovenia. For *The Gods Are Not To Blame,* the director was Nigerian-Canadian, but the actors were black Canadians from all over the world. In *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses*, the director was from Trinidad, one actor was Caribbean Canadian, and the designer was from Zimbabwe. In all cases, the audience was partly from the African community in Toronto, partly from the Caribbean community in Toronto, and partly from the non-black community interested in alternative kinds of theatre. The audience came from a wide range of educational backgrounds and their familiarity with the scripts was varied, as was their understanding of the signs.

In today's migratory, globalised,[1] cosmopolitan world, a multiplicity of backgrounds and an internal diversity of countries are much more likely to be found than a pure culture dealing with another pure culture. "[Globalization] should not be read as prefiguring the emergence of a harmonious world society or as a universal process of global integration in which there is a growing convergence of cultures and civilizations," write Held and McGrew (4). We can see that at least at the level of intercultural theatre, this is true. As the hybrid cultures reach towards each other, there is no guaranteed harmony or assurance that metaphors will be easily understood. Sociologist Arjun Appadurai describes this kind of diverse, migratory space an "ethnoscape" (231). Obviously, this ethnoscape quality of Canada cannot be ignored when considering how to analyse intercultural theatre.

Hybridity and globalisation also contribute to the existence of Homi Bhabha's third space within the text and in the performance process. Bhabha suggests that the existence of third space at the borders of cultures and times, challenges our idea of "culture as a homogenizing force" (*Location* 37). It exposes "the limits of any claim

[1] Held and McGrew identify five major concepts encompassed by the idea of 'globalization'. They suggest one idea is that "action of social agents in one locale can come to have significant consequences for 'distant' others." Very different is the idea of time-space compression, which refers to rapid travel and electronic communication "erodes the constraints of distance and time on social organization and interaction." The third concept they call "accelerating interdependence" which refers to the way that economies and societies are so enmeshed that events in directly impact others. Fourth, they mention the shrinking world which erodes borders to socio-economic activity. Finally, they mention "global integration" which they describe as "interregional power relations, consciousness of the global condition and the intensity of inter-regional interconnectedness" (3).

to a singular or autonomous sign of difference" (*Location* 218) and thus prevents theatre practitioners and audiences from making assumptions about culture or about intercultural performance. At the same time it allows for what he calls "interstitial intimacy" (*Location* 13) between these spaces of difference where dialogue and understanding may or may not occur, where ideas may remain foreign and obscure, or where ideas are no longer other or unfamiliar, but become "something else besides" (*Location* 218). If we accept the existence of third space then "inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable" (Bhabha, *Location* 37). Purity may not exist, but difference certainly does. In the margins of difference, directors and theatre analysts may find third space.

Third space exists chaotically and often unpredictably, so it may seem antithetical to suggest that directors should find ways to effectively use third space in the creation of intercultural theatre. In places where the borders of difference make contact, theatre practitioners cannot control the third space, but they can use techniques to make the space a productive one, and in so doing, support or negate the possibility of intercultural communication. Locating third space means that practitioners must carefully explore the first filter in Patrice Pavis's hourglass of cultures "Cultural and Artistic Modelling." While analysing the production process of *Madmen and Specialists, The Gods Are Not To Blame* and *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses,* I discovered that identifying elements in the play that are foreign to the target audience is often a matter of where the director positions him or herself in relation to the script. What may be perceived as foreign by the audience is not necessarily what the director may anticipate them perceiving as foreign. Since the two Nigerian plays were directed by Nigerians, they had to imagine what Canadians would perceive as foreign about the text. Salman Rushdie argues that not only are texts translated as they migrate from one place to another, but so are people. They are redefined by the people who surround them, and they must then redefine their homeland, their past, and themselves. This ambiguous nuance that contributes to a person's understanding of what is foreign is explored in Rushdie's discussion of the migrant who is transformed by the very act of migration. In "John Berger," one of Rushdie's essays in *Imaginary Homelands*, he suggests that the migrant has the potential to transform

his new world, just, perhaps, as intercultural theatre practitioners may transform their world. Rushdie admits that "migrants may well become mutants, but it is out of such hybridization that newness can emerge" (210). The mutation of theatre is a very real risk if care is not taken to make effective cultural translations, and is doubly difficult if the practitioners must rediscover the foreign in themselves. Only once foreign elements are adequately identified can decisions be made concerning ways to transfer those elements to the target culture. In that transfer between differences, a productive third space may open up. In that kind of space, the audience might enter into an arena of understanding or might acknowledge that the intercultural space is confusing.

Finding the most appropriate techniques to assist the transfer of culture in the theatre is exciting, and relates directly to the style, content, and goals of the piece. *Madmen and Specialists* is grotesque, cruel, absurd, and layered with mythology. The sickening horror of the content is intended to protest war of any kind. *The Gods Are Not To Blame* is modelled after a Greek classic, and originally intended to protest against tribalism and rash leadership. *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* is very close to theatre-for-development in style, and protests against racial discrimination and the oppression of women in Southern Africa. The balance required for dealing with these disparate ideas is delicate. While they come from a foreign source, transferring the issues to a Canadian context should not have to mean universalising them. In fact, for them to retain any meaning, the plays need to maintain cultural specificity. Appadurai suggests "the central problem of today's global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization" (230). Cultural heterogeneity is necessary for the plays to be meaningful or interesting, but directors can find ways to assist the audience in understanding those themes. In Tony Adah's production of *Madmen and Specialists,* he chose to do very little to assist the audience, and the complexity of the play combined with the essential contribution of unfamiliar Nigerian cultural elements overwhelmed me. A greater consciousness by Adah of the challenges facing the foreign audience may have helped me to better understand Soyinka's message. Bayo Akinfemi approached Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not To Blame* by focussing on "authenticity." The result, however, was the transfer of only the superficial aspects of Nigerian culture, bordering on "exotica,"

while the opportunity to foreground Rotimi's highly transferable and relevant ideas about tribalism and leadership were lost. Rhoma Spencer, in *And the Girls and their Sunday Dresses,* used Brechtian performance techniques to highlight the theatre-for-development roots of the piece, and although she could have gone farther with them, they did support the goals of the playwright. All three of these plays present ideas worth discussing in Canada, and theatre practitioners need to find ways to consciously transfer them to the Canadian cultural context.

Finally, no matter what tools directors provide or do not provide to ease the intercultural theatre transfer, the audience is the final creator of meaning. The audience is capable of radically misinterpreting communication methods such as the language of proverbs or the language of music and dance. Salman Rushdie admits that meaning can be lost in translation but adds "I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained" (17). Held and McGrew also suggest that "foreign cultural products are constantly read and interpreted in novel ways by national audiences" (16). However, if the director is vigilant, then the multiple voices within each text may be heard, if not understood. If the production manages to create arenas of third space into which the audience can enter, then a meaningful, intercultural theatre experience is possible.

Works Cited

Primary Sources

Interviews:

Adah, Tony. Personal interview. Edmonton. 11 March 2002.

Akinfemi, Bayo. Telephone interview. 8 May 2002.

Olaogun, Modupe. Personal interview. York University. 22 October 2001.

Spencer, Rhoma. Telephone interview. 22 April 2002.

Performances:

And the Girls in Their Sunday Dresses. By Zakes Mda. Dir. Rhoma Spencer. Comp. AfriCan Theatre Ensemble. ArtWord Theatre. Oct. 4 – 21 2001.

The Gods Are Not To Blame. By Ola Rotimi. Dir. Bayo Akinfemi. Comp. AfriCan Theatre Ensemble. ArtWord Theatre. June 16 – 20 1999.

Madmen and Specialists. By Wole Soyinka. Dir. Tony Adah. Hart House Theatre, Toronto. Oct. 17 – 20 2001.

Scripts:

Rotimi, Ola. *The Gods Are Not To Blame*. Oxford University Press, London and Ibadan, 1971.

Sophocles. "Oedipus the King." *The Three Theban Plays*. Trans Robert Fagles. Penguin Books, New York, 1984.

Soyinka, Wole. "Death and the King's Horseman." *Six Plays*. Methuen, London. 1984.

---. "Madmen and Specialists." *Six Plays*. Methuen, London, 1984.

Mda, Zakes. *And the Girls in Their Sunday Dresses: four works*. Johnannesburg, South Africa: Witwatersrand University Press, 1993.

Secondary Sources

Achebe, Chinua. *The African Trilogy: Things Fall Apart, No Longer At Ease, Arrow of God*. London: Picador, 1988.

Acholonu, Catherine Obianuju. "Role of Nigerian Dancers in Drama." *Nigeria Magazine*. 53.1 (1985). 33-39.

Afigbo, A.E. et. al. *The Making of Modern Africa: The Twentieth Century*. Vol 2. Essex: Longman Group, 1986.

AfriCan Theatre Ensemble. "AfriCan Theatre Ensemble." 22 April 2002. <www.africantheatreensemble.com>

---. "And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses." 29 April 2002. <www.artword.net/website/Theatre/2001_fall/Dresses.htm>

---. "The Gods Are Not to Blame." 22 April 2002. Artword Theatre. <www.artword.net/website/Theatre/Current/artword_gods.htm>

Amankalor, J. Ndukaka. "English-Language Drama and Theater." *A History of Twentieth Century African Literatures*. Ed. Oyekan Owonoyela. University of Nebraska Press, 1993. 133-172.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* Rev. ed. Verso, London and New York, 1983.

Appadurai, Arjun. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." *The Global Transformations Reader*. Ed. David Held and Anthony McGrew, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000. 230 – 238.

BTC. *Black Theatre Canada in Perspective*. BTC, 1975.

---. *The Location of Culture.* London: Routledge, 1994.

Banham, Martin. "African Literature II: Nigerian Dramatists in English and the Traditional Nigerian Theatre." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. July 1967. 97-102.

---. "Darkness and Threat." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature.* 8.1. 1973. 124-126.

---. "Ola Rotmi: Humanity as my tribesman." *Modern Drama.* 33. 1990. 67-81.

Barber, Karin. *The Generation of Plays: Yorùbá Popular Life in Theater.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000.

Bataille, Georges. *Eroticism.* Trans. Mary Dalwood. London: John Calder, 1962.

Bennett, Susan. "Spectatorship Across Culture." *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception.* 2nd Edition. London and New York: Routledge, 1997.

Bhabha, Homi K. "Interview with Homi Bhabha." Interview with David Attwell. *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa*. 5.2 1993. 100-113.

---. *The Location of Culture.* London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

Bharucha, Rustom. *The Politics of Cultural Practice: Thinking Through Theatre in an Age of Globalization.* Hanover: Wesleyan UP, 2000.

---. *Theatre and the World: Essays on Performance and Politics of Culture.* London and New York: Routledge, 1993.

Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Theatre.* Ed. and trans. John Willett. Hill and Wang: New York, 1964, 1992.

Breon, Robin. "Clear voice out of Africa." *Globe and Mail.* 3 Nov 2001: R19.

Byczniski, Julie. "A word in a foreign language: On Not Translating in the Theatre." *Canadian Theatre Review.* 102. (Spring 2000): 33-37.

Caldwell, Rebecca. "Theatre: Time has left these girls behind." *Globe and Mail.* 6 October 2001: R9.

Caudeiron, Daniel. "Black Theatre Travels A Rocky Road." *Spear.* (April 1978): 42-45.

Cheah, Pheng and Bruce Robbins, eds. *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

Cima, Gay Gibson. *Performing Women: Female Characters, Male Playwrights, and the Modern Stage.* Itathca: Cornell U.P., 1993.

Clark, John Pepper. *The Example of Shakespeare.* Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970.

Cock, Jacklyn. *Maids and Madams: Domestic Workers Under Apartheid.* Rev. ed. London: The Women's Press, 1989.

Coombes, Annie E. "The Distance Between Two Points: Global Culture and the Liberal Dilemma." *Traveller's Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement.* Ed. George Robertson et al. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.177-186.

Dhruvarajan, Vanaja. "Women of Colour in Canada." *Gender, Race, and Nation: A Global Perspective.* Vanaja Dhruvarajan and Jill Vickers. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002. 99-122.

Diamond, Elin. "Brechtian Theory / Feminist Theory." *The Drama Review.* 32.1 1988. 82 – 94.

Dunton, Chris. "Ola Rotimi." *Make Man Talk True: Nigerian Drama in English Since 1970*. Gen. ed. Eldred Jones. New Perspectives on African Literature Series. London: Hans Zell Publishers, 1992. 11-20.

Egejuru, Phannel Akubueze. *Black Writers: White Audience: A Critical Approach to Literature*. Hicksville, New York: Exposition Press, 1978.

Etherton, Michael. "Trends in African Theatre." *African Litearture Today: Retrospect and Prospect*. Ed. Eldred Durosimi Jones. London: Heinmann, 1979. 57-85.

Fiebach, Joachim. "Wole Soyinka and Heiner Müller: Different Cultural Contexts, Similar Apporaches." Fischer-Lichte et al. 263-276.

Fischer-Lichte, Erika, Josephine Riley and Michael Gissenwehrer. *The Dramatic Touch of Difference: Theatre, Own and Foreign*. Forum Modernes Theater, Bd 2. Gunter Narr Verlag Tübingen, 1990.

Fischer-Lichte, Erika. "Theatre, Own and Foreign: The Intercultural Trend in Contemporary Theatre." Fischer-Lichte et al. 11-22.

Flockemann, Miki. "Women, Feminism and South African Theatre." *The Routledge Reader in Gender and Performance*. Lizbeth Goodman with Jane de Gay, eds. London and New York: Routledge, 1998. 218-222.

Gebeyehu, Tamrat. "Thematic Evolution in Ola Rotimi's Plays: 1966 – 1984." Diss. University of Alberta, 1993.

Goldman, Laurence R. "From Pot to Polemic: Uses and Abuses of Cannibalism." *The Anthropology of Cannibalism*. Ed. Laurence R. Goldman. London: Begin and Garvey, 1999. 1-26.

Graver, David, ed. *Drama for a New South Africa: Seven Plays*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Held, David and Anthony McGrew. "The Great Globalization Debate: An Introduction." *The Global Transformations Reader*. Eds. Held and McGrew. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000. 1-46.

Heywood, Annemarie. "The Fox's Dance: The Staging of Soyinka's Plays." *Perspectives on Wole Soyinka: Freedom and Complexity*. Ed. Biodun Jeyifo. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001.

Holquist, Michael. *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World.* London and New York: Routledge, 1990.

hooks, bell. "Back to Black: Ending Internalized Racism." *Feminism: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies.* Mary Evans, ed. Vol. 4. Feminism and the Politics of Difference. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. 70-77.

Jeyifo, Biodun. "The Reinvention of Theatrical Tradition: Critical Discourses on Interculturalism in the African Theatre." Erika Fischer-Lichte et al. 239-252.

Jeyifo, Biodun., ed. *Conversations with Wole Soyinka.* Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001.

Johnson, Alex C. "Ola Rotimi: How Significant?" *African Literature Today.* 12. (1982): 137-153.

Johnson, Chris. "Performance and Role-playing in Soyinka's *Madmen and Specialists.*" *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature.* 10.3 (1976): 27-32.

Kaplan, John. "Sunday Sermon." *Now online.* October 11 – 17 2001. <www.nowtoronto.com/issues/2001-10-11/stage_theatrereviews2.html>

Katrak, Ketu. *Wole Soyinka and Modern Tragedy: A Study of Dramatic Theory and Practice.* Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986.

Kruger, Loren. *The Drama of South Africa: Plays, pageants and publics since 1910.* London and New York: Routledge, 1999.

Lestringant, Frank. "Cannibalism and Colonialism: Jules Verne." *Cannibals: The Discovery and Representation of the Cannibal from Columbus to Jules Verne.* Trans. Rosemary Morris. Berkley: Univeristy of California Press, 1997. 170 – 179.

Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism-postcolonialism.* London and New York: Routledge, 1998.

Lundahl, Mats and Lennart Petersson. *The Dependent Economy: Lesotho and the Southern African Customs Union.* Boulder: Westview Press, 1991.

Malchow, H.L. "Cannibalism and Popular Culture." *Gothic Images of Race in 19th Century Britain.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996. 41-123.

Marranca, Bonnie and Gautam Dasgupta. *Interculturalism and Performance: Writings from PAJ.* New York: PAJ Publications, 1991.

Martin, Sandra. "Out of African and back again." *Globe and Mail on line*, December 4 2001.

Mda, Zakes. "Politics and the Theatre: Current Trends in South Africa." *Theatre and Change in South Africa.* Ed. Geoffrey V. Davis and Anne Fuchs. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers and Overseas Publishers Association, 1996. 193-218.

---. "Theater and Reconciliation in South Africa." *Theater.* 25.3. New Haven, Connecticut: 1995. 38-45.

---. *When People Play People: Development Communication Through Theatre.* London: Zed Books, 1993.

Nasiru, Akanji. "Folk-Lore in Nigerian Drama: An Examination of the Works of Three Nigerian Dramatists." *Literary Half-Yearly* (January 1978-79): 51-63.

"Nigeria." *The World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre: Africa.* Ed. Don Rubin, Ousmane Diakhaté and Hansel Ndumbe Eyoh. London and New York: Routledge-Taylor and Francis, 2001.

Okafor, Chinyere G. "Ola Rotimi: The Man, the Playwright and the Producer, on the Nigerian Stage." *World Literature Today.* 64.1 (Winter 1990): 24-29.

Okpi, Kalu. "Ola Rotimi: A Popular Nigerian Dramatist and Man of the Theatre." *Literary Criterion.* 23. (1988): 106-117.

Ogundele, Wole. "Irony and Grotesque in *Madmen and Specialists*." *World Literature Written in English.* 21. (Spring 1982): 43-54.

Osofisan, Femi. "The Alternative Tradition: A Survey of Nigerian Literature in English Since the Civil War." *Présence Africaine.* 139. (1986): 162-184.

Ousman, Souley Y. "The Ecstatic Framework: Language, Music and Dance in Selected Soyinka Plays." *Beyond Survival: African Literature and the Search for New Life.* Ed Kofi Anyidoho, et al. Trenton, New Jersey and Asmara, Eritrea:African World Press Inc. 1999. 147-157.

Pavis, Patrice. "Interculturalism in Contemporary Mise En Scène: The Image of India in 'The Mahabharata' and the 'Indiade.'" Fischer-Lichte et al. 57-71.

---. *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture.* Trans. Loren Kruger. London and New York: Routledge, 1992.

---. "Towards a theory of interculturalism in theatre?" *The Intercultural Performance Reader.* Ed. Patrice Pavis. London: Routledge, 1996.

Peters, Julie Stone. "Intercultural Performance, Theatre Anthropology, and the Imperialist Critique: Identities, Inheritances, and Neo-Orthoxies." *Imperialism and Theatre: Essays on World Theatre, Drama, and Performance, 1795 – 1995.* Ed. J. Ellen Gainor. London and New York: Routledge, 1995.

Rotimi, Ola. "Conditions in the Third World: A Playwright's Soliloquy on His Experiences." *The Word Behind Bars and the Paradox of Exile.* Ed. Kofi Anyidoho. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern UP, 1997.

---. "Interview with Ola Rotimi." *Dem-Say: Interview with Eight Nigerian Writers.* B. Lindfors, ed. African and Afro-American Studies Research Center, 1974. 57-68

---. "Much Ado About Brecht." Erika Fischer-Lichte et al. 253-262.

Ruder, Sharah. "Thoughts on Mda, Ndebele and Black South African Writing at the Millenium." *The Iowa Review.* 28.2. (1998): 155-166.

Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981 – 1991.* London: Granta Books, 1991.

Shaw, Timothy M. "Southern Africa in Comparitive Perspective." *Foreign Policy in Small States: Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Southern Africa.* Halifax: Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, Dalhousie University, 1988. 1-7.

Shechner, Richard. *Between Theatre and Anthropology.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985.

---. *By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual.* Ed. Richard Schechner and Willa Appel. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990.

Shumba, Muzi-Pasi E. "Structures and Ideas in Soyinka's *Madmen and Specialists.*" Diss. University of Alberta, 1973.

"South Africa." *The World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre: Africa.* Ed. Don Rubin, Ousmane Diakhaté and Hansel Ndumbe Eyoh. London and New York: Routledge-Taylor and Francis, 2001.

Soyinka, Wole. "The Fourth Stage." *Art, Dialogue and Outrage: Essays on Literature and Culture.* Ibadan, Nigeria: New Horn Press, 1988. 21-34.

---. "From Ghetto to Garrison: A Case of *Orisunitis*." *Research in African Literatures*. 30.4. 1999. 6-23.

---. "An Interview with Wole Soyinka." Interview with Henry Louis Gates Jr. *Conversations With Wole Soyinka*. Ed. Biodun Jeyifo. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001. 48-67.

---. "Interview with Wole Soyinka." Interview with John Agetua. *Conversations With Wole Soyinka*. Ed. Biodun Jeyifo. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001. 32-47.

---. "Realms of Value in Literature Art: Interview with Wole Soyinka.'" Interview with Biodun Jeyifo. *Conversations with Wole Soyinka*. Ed. Biodun Jeyifo. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001. 116 – 128.

---. "Soyinka in Zimbabwe." Question and Answers with James Gibbs. *Conversations With Wole Soyinka*. Ed. Biodun Jeyifo. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001. 68 – 115.

---. "Wole Soyinka on 'Identity'." Interview with Ulli Beier. *Conversations With Wole Soyinka*. Ed. Biodun Jeyifo. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001. 167-181.

Stovel, Nora Foster. "Introduction," and "Appendices." *Long drums & cannons : Nigerian dramatists and novelists, 1952-1966*. Margaret Laurence. Ed. Nora Foster Stovel. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001.

Swatuk, Larry A. "Lesotho: Walking the Highwire Between Rhetoric and Reality." *Foreign Policy in Small States: Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Southern Africa*. Halifax: Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, Dalhousie University, 1988. 32-61.

Trinh, T. Minh-ha. "Other than myself/My other self." *Traveller's Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement*. Ed. George Robertson et al. London and New York: Routledge, 1994. 9-28.

---. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Bloomington and Inidanapolis: Indiana UP, 1989.

Volosinov, V.N. "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art (Concerning Sociological Poetics)." *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique.* Ed. Neal H. Bruss. Trans. I.R. Titunik. New York: Academic Press, 1976. 93-116.

Wright, Derek. "Tranisition and the Grotesque: Soyinka's *Madmen and Specialists*." *Commonwealth.* 18.2. (Spring 1996): 21-28.

Yengar, K.R. Srinivasa. "Soyinka's Latest Play." *The Literary Half-Yearly.* 17.2. (1976): 3-17.